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ARENA

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Editorial Note

A KEY-IDEA will be found to run through this issue of *Arena*: What is the nature of *Freedom* in our world?

The first main items deal with writers caught up in the direct struggle for freedom: the great Turkish poet, Nazim Hikmet, who has been imprisoned for some fifteen years because of his unjailable poetry, and the Czech Julius Fucik, who died under the hands of the Gestapo after managing to smuggle out his magnificent testimony to the unconquerable spirit of life—the voice of those to whom the future belongs. Here are two men luminous in the darkness of unfreedom, most free in conditions of confining hell. Beside Hikmet's own poetry we have the honour of printing the Greek poet Loudemis's brotherly response from Makronisos Concentration Camp.

Fucik's work has been compared with the lyric poetry of Eluard as a vanguard expression of the New Man emerging out of the struggles of our world. What then more suitable than to hear next Eluard acclaiming another of the devoted free spirits?

We next step into the sphere of unfreedom, where the jail is wider but the ultimate fetters consist always in the extent to which the imprisoning forces manage to darken the minds and souls of men and divert them from the way of struggle. Three stories of the West Indies, the colonial world of crushing burdens where the human being yet persists and hopes and seeks a way-out. Five Welsh sonnets that express the vital force of the miners breaking out of the "black dust" of the system; poems by the French poet Guillevic with their lyrical aphoristic quality and lucid grasp of struggle; and a sequence of poems by Montagu Slater, a tangential commentary on our world, its cheats and truths. And the drawings of the prison-house of Spain, its unbroken prisoners and fear-celled jailors, point the moral of struggle.

Finally, the effort to get philosophically inside the situation: an essay that begins the fundamental inquiry into the freedom and unfreedom of our own culture at this moment of profound choice. And then some factual commentary.

Since the completion of our essay, world-pressure (especially from the French intellectuals) has obtained the release of Hikmet on the grounds of very grave illness.

RANDALL SWINGLER

Nazim Hikmet

The Voice of Humanity from a Turkish Prison

TURKEY is a country about which we hear very little, and are meant to hear very little. As American economic and military control has tightened over the republic of Ismet Inonu, so has the curtain of war-security been drawn closer over it. Naturally enough, for by its geographical position Turkey occupies an important place in the offensive strategy of Washington.

But this curtain of obscurity has now been hurled courageously back for us, in a manner literally breath-taking, by a poet, Turkey's greatest living writer and one of the most important at present living in the world. And living in the world at large Nazim Hikmet incontestably and astonishingly is, though he has been in prison for the last thirteen years. But the prison of Brusa has proved quite unable to restrict his passionate interest in the struggle for life of the common people of all lands, or the range and intensity of his poetic voice. Hikmet's years in prison have proved the most fruitful of his life, and from year to year his poems, smuggled out and passed from hand to hand and from mouth to mouth, have become more widely known, more eagerly looked for, until among the working people of his own country his reputation and influence have reached almost legendary proportions. But Hikmet, on hunger-strike since April 8th, suffering from heart-disease as a result of prison conditions now in the prison infirmary with tuberculosis, is more than a symbol. The matter and manner of his work, his unquenchable love of life and people, the fulfilled personality whose most intimate relations are perfectly fused with human sympathies literally world-wide, is the mouthpiece of the new spirit, one of the spokesmen of the new era for humanity.

He was born at Salonika in 1901, his father occupying a distinguished post in the foreign service and being himself a well-known painter. He was educated at the Naval College, against whose savage discipline he wrote his first poems of fiery indignation. He threw himself into the Kemalist revolt which overthrew the corrupt regime of the Sultans, but was carried through and

beyond it by the inspiration of the October Revolution in Russia. From then on it was his determination to study in the Soviet Union, and in 1920 he reached Batum and proceeded from there to Moscow. For the next eight years he gave himself up to a strenuous study of political-economy and sociology; but poetry remained his vocation, and while in Moscow he came to know Mayakovsky well, and learned from him the necessity for a revolution in poetic expression. Poems began to reach the progressive reviews in Turkey of a strength and range previously unknown, and immediately he became recognized as the most powerful figure in contemporary Turkish literature.

Hikmet did not abandon the traditional forms of Arabo-Persian poetry: he transformed them. His style represents an adaptation of the living elements in the tradition to the accent of contemporary demands and a wider audience. His method appears as a more or less regular pattern of loose declamatory rhythms and cadences, of a kind which recalls the aural and improvisatory tradition of folk-singing in all countries. In this way his style expresses exactly that fusion of the traditional with the popular which is the inheritance by the working class of the best traditions of the past. Hikmet appears to have derived from classical Persian poetry an extreme delicacy of expression and universality of mind which he has transformed into the immediate, vivid, vernacular language and rhythm of popular thought and feeling. His originality is the very opposite of peculiarity, of exclusiveness, which is the last distinction of bourgeois individualism. He is original by virtue of the simplicity of vision which incorporates a new fusion of past and present, which advances the consciousness of humanity by articulating that experience of the world which is universal but unrealised.

The individualist poets of the era of bourgeois decadence cramped within their prisons of the mind, have been forced to attempt to corner for themselves some tiny area of thought and feeling which is outside the sphere of normal experience. Their *ego* can only be asserted in terms of its difference from others. Their originality, their so-called "genius", has consisted in the sedulous cultivation of abnormality.

Nazim Hikmet has established himself as one of the triumphant poets of normality, of "health, peace and happiness". His poetry, the refinement and realization of common experience, re-affirms the principles and possibility of "greatness" in literature (which is a primary issue of the new socialist humanism).

His enemies, as well as his friends, were quick to recognize the power of his work. And it must be said for the Turkish

Government that they have never shown that contempt for poetry which is characteristic of officialdom in the English-speaking world, though their respect has manifested itself in the paradoxical form of abject terror and savage persecution. While Hikmet was still in the U.S.S.R. he was tried and condemned for sedition and sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude, on the pretext of his published poems alone. Whether through an overburdened official conscience, or whether in the sneaking hope that Hikmet was gone for good, this incredible sentence was later reduced to three months imprisonment.

But Hikmet did return, in 1928, never having doubted that his life and his work must always be at the centre of his own people's life-struggle. He was immediately arrested, and served the first of his long series of imprisonments. From then on, whether in or out of prison, his life was a single-minded progress of intense and prolific activity: he wrote poems, novels, plays, pamphlets, carried on polemics and controversy, edited magazines, ran printing presses. Again and again he was arrested, brought before the judges on fantastic charges, always defended with great courage and brilliance by his faithful advocate, Irfan Emin. And all the time his influence was increasing, his power maturing: the younger writers were fired with his enthusiasm and with the new range of literary possibilities which he had opened up to them: his poems were reaching far beyond the intellectual world, even the reading public, were being learned by heart by the dockers of Brusa and Smyrna, the oil-workers of Adana. He had found his true audience.

But the Government were determined to silence him for good. The final indictment and trial when it came was both the most ludicrous and the most blatantly unconstitutional of all. One day in 1936, Hikmet entered a café, sat at a table by the window, and put a newspaper over his head to protect his eyes from the strong sun. A friend came over from another table to speak to him, sat down and also covered his head with a newspaper. The sleepless eye of the secret police took in every detail: a report went in to the effect that Nazim Hikmet belonged to a conspiratorial secret society, whose sign of recognition between members was the placing of a newspaper on the head. He was arrested on December 31st, 1936. The proceedings were so grotesque that even the Court of Assize of Istanbul was compelled to order his release. The Government were furious. A kit inspection of the cadets of the officers school and the Naval College was ordered, which revealed a number of copies of works by Hikmet in the property of the cadets. They were all books which could have

been found in any library in Turkey. This was enough to bring a charge of incitement to mutiny against Hikmet, and this time they saw to it that the trial should be in camera, without legal aid, and before a military tribunal.

His advocate, Irfan Emin, protested vehemently. The Government hastily introduced a new law declaring all persons persistently defending those accused of communism dismissed from the Bar. Hikmet faced two tribunals, a Naval and a Military. The sentences pronounced by the two, together added up to twenty eight years five months. He was taken to the prison at Brusa, where he has been ever since.

During his imprisonment he has carried on his life and work unchecked. His humanity extends undamped to his warders and fellow-prisoners; "he teaches them to paint", it is reported, "to sing and to think, and he writes poems which roll across our country like waves". He has written a number of epical poems around figures of the national and popular struggles of Turkish history, peasant heroes who have become part of the mythology of the poorest classes in a country of whose population forty per cent are still illiterate.

Some idea of the heroic spirit of the man may be gathered from this literal translation of a poem he wrote when he was told that he had developed *angina pectoris* after some years of prison life:—

If there is only half of my heart here, Doctor,
It is because the other half is in China
In the army which sweeps down to the Yellow River.

Then again, every morning, Doctor,
Every single morning at dawn
I am shot through the heart, in Greece.

Then again, when all the prisoners sink in sleep
And the last footsteps fade from the sick-bay
My heart is away, Doctor,
Away in an old wooden house in Istanbul.

And then again, for the last ten years, Doctor
I have had nothing in my hands to give my people
My suffering people, except for a little apple
A red apple, my heart.

I gaze into the night between the bars
And in spite of all these walls that weigh on my breast
My heart beats with the beat of the furthest star.

And it is because of all these things, Doctor,
Not hardening arteries, nicotine, nor prison,
That now I have this *angina pectoris*.

On March the ninth of this year, the Turkish Government placed before its Department of Justice a proposal to amnesty some three hundred and fifty political prisoners arrested during the last thirteen years. It was a safe gesture, for the number included many Nazi and Italian fascist agents interned at the end of the war. The very proposal gave the opportunity for an unprecedented anti-Soviet and anti-Communist campaign in the Turkish press. When it was discussed in the National Assembly, one government deputy, Ibrahim Avras, declared summarily—"We ought to make a clean sweep of the Communists as Hitler did with the Jews."

On the 24th of March, the project was curtly withdrawn and the National Assembly dissolved. *By coincidence,* this was the very day of the arrival in Ankara straight from Washington of the American Ambassador and the military advisor General Collins. On April the 8th Nazim Hikmet announced that if the Government did not implement its proposal of an amnesty, he would go on hunger strike. Once again, only his own words (or the nearest we can get to his own words) are adequate to speak of this: —

ON THE FIFTH DAY OF A HUNGER STRIKE

Brothers,
If I can't speak my mind clearly
Forgive me, my brothers;
I feel a little tipsy, just slightly dizzy,
It is not because of raki
But I am a bit hungry.

Brothers,
In Europe, in Asia, in America,
This is not like a hunger strike in a prison cell,
This is like lying on the grass at night in the month of May,
And your eyes glimmer like stars above me,
And all your hands are like a single hand,
Like my mother's hand,
Like my love's hand,
Like Mehmed's hand,
Like life's hand in mine.

Brothers,
Anyway you never left me all alone,
You never gave up either myself,
Nor my country and my people.
Because you love us,
As much as we love you,
We are thankful to you, my brothers.

Brothers,
I don't intend to die,
But if I am killed
I know
I know I shall go on living by your side,
I shall live in Aragon's lines,
—In all his lines that tell of the beautiful days
that are to be—
And in Picasso's white dove,
And in Robeson's songs,
And best of all
In the triumphal laughter of my comrade among the
dockers in Marseilles.

Brothers,
The truth is that I am passionately happy.

6th May, 1950.
NAZIM HIKMET.

On the 12th of May, news came from Ankara that Nazim Hikmet had been transferred to the prison hospital in a state of exhaustion and infected with tuberculosis. He had declared that he would still refuse all food. And that is the last we have heard

Nazim Hikmet is spoken of by all who know him as having a magnificent presence, coruscating with vitality, "open and generous as a fountain of Anatolia". The lyrics which we print here, translated from the French of H. Gureh and Kemal, can only give a faint impression of the limpid freedom of expression, the elastic simplicity which arises from a deep absorption of common and traditional patterns of symbolism, and the crystal integrity of a personality for whom the most private emotions of love. frustration, nostalgia, have as wide and urgent a connotation as any philosophic or political statement of faith.

So the Roll of Honour grows, of those fearless and finest intellects of our time hunted and harried by the withered paranoiacs of a rotting, war-haunted civilization mocked by the name of Western Democracy: Joliot-Curie dismissed, Aragon deprived of civil rights, Howard Fast in goal, Pablo Neruda in exile with a price on his head, Paul Robeson hounded by thug-police and vigilantes, Nazim Hikmet dying for the sole crime of being a great poet.

"Which side are you on, masters of culture?"

THEY WON'T LET US SING

They won't let us sing, Paul Robeson,
My canary with eagle's wings,
My dark brother with teeth of pearl,
They won't let us utter our songs.

They are afraid, Paul Robeson,
Afraid of the daybreak, afraid to see,
Afraid to listen, afraid to touch,
They are afraid of love,
Afraid to love as Ferhad loved with passion
(Assuredly you too, my dark brothers,
You have a Ferhad—what is his name, Paul Robeson?)
They are afraid of the corn and the earth
Afraid of running water
Afraid of their memories

They have never shaken the hand of a friend
Who wants nor accounts nor commissions nor terms
The hand of a friend like a warm bird
For they are afraid of hope, Paul Robeson,
Afraid of hope!
They are afraid, my canary with eagle's wings,
Afraid of *our* songs, Paul Robeson.

(*October* 1949) *written after the Peckskill Riots.*

OF LIFE

This life is not a joke
You must treat it as a serious thing,
As a squirrel does, if you like,
Without expecting a Beyond or a Hereafter—
Then you'll have nothing else to do but live.

This life is not a joke
You must take it seriously,
Seriously enough to find yourself
Up against a wall, maybe, with your wrists bound,
Or in a white laboratory coat
And thick spectacles
About to die that other men may live
Men whose faces you have never even seen—
And you will die in the full consciousness
That there is nothing so fine, so sure as Life

You must take it seriously
But serious up to the point where you start
Planting olives at three score years and ten
Not in the least because they will grow for your children
But simply because you don't believe in death
And the root of your disbelief
Is the overriding preciousness of Life.

SEVENTH LETTER

Your hair that is often red as fire
Your eyes that are sometimes green
And sometimes the colour of honey
Would you ever have seen them like that?

Anyone could have seen them
But it was I who saw them
Just as they are
For I was the first to sing them
And I only would say of this world
What has never been said before me

My life, that's dedicated
To all that is best in the world
To the beauty men could make real
To the most urgent need of our time
But there are men without number
Who have the same resolution
Devoted to it with steadfastness
Stronger perhaps than mine

But your hair, often red as fire,
And your eyes that are sometimes green
And sometimes the colour of honey
—Only you do not know it—
Your hands
Marvellous beyond words!

Did you know moreover
That man carries in his hand the mark of his class?
These are great truths
For example the role of the hand in social development
But they were discovered before me
And I, only I, have seen
The beauty of your hands
And I was the first to sing them.

Your hair often red as fire,
Your eyes sometimes green
And sometimes the colour of honey
And your hands—
You may as well know it at last—
They are marvellous beyond words!

1940

From THE VOYAGE OF YOUSOUF THE LUCKLESS

Yousouf the Luckless
Has drawn a boat
On the stone of the fountain
In the prison courtyard.
A prisoner who comes to drink
Is watching the tapering prow
Slip through the fenceless seas.

Near the fountain
Stands a tree all in white
A blossoming plum-tree

Yousouf the Luckless
Shake out more sail
And haúl towards you

The haven you seek
And break
From the plum-tree a branch of blossom
That all the doves from the prison
May follow in your wake.

Yousouf the Luckless
Take me on your boat
My baggage is not heavy
A book
A photograph
A writing-pad

Let's go, Brother, let's go
For the world is worth the trouble of seeing

Koumkaleh over the stern
The lighthouse of Hellyos over the prow
The winds of the Aegean
In the mouth of our sails
A passionate song

From port to port we pass
The rapture of boundlessness
Which the high seas know
Is bounded by its ports:

In the ports of the world to-day
It is easy to die, Yousouf,
And hard to keep alive.

*

In the Adriatic
We hailed a fishing-boat
And asked for news of Italy:
An old man of Ancona told us,
"Nothing new. There are two happy men,
The Negus in flight, the Duce in triumph".

That old Ancona fisherman was right.
The Duce has set a bloody wreath
On his magniloquent verbosities
And the Negus fleeing a palace without a bathroom
Has gone to another which has many bathrooms.

At night
We lie off Sicily
An ocean-liner looms above our masts
Deck tiered on towering deck and showered with lights
Like a whole world fallen from the stars
Like a fallen world of stars.

You and I, Yousouf,
Can only crane our necks to gaze at it
And till it disappears from view
Smoke an unbroken chain of cigarettes.

*

The air is becalmed
Red streaks in the sky
It is dawn
The end of a night which once seemed endless
We are face to face with Barcelona
The Barcelona of the Popular Front.

There our voyage finishes;
Take in the sails one by one
Lower the anchor.
The prison doves who followed our wake
Are away back now
To tell our mates we are here.
And Yousouf swears a magnificent oath
Upon those distant walls and chains
Waving his branch of plum-blossom
Towards the town that faces us.

My eyes look through him to Barcelona:
Down there in the heart of it
I see flames rising
I see down there stand side by side
Lenin
Bakunin
Robespierre
And Mehmet the peasant who fought at Doumloupinar.

And so it was, that Yousouf and I
Borne in a boat of a prison fountain
Have seen in Barcelona, in the dawn,
Liberty battling in flesh and bone.

We looked into her flaming eyes
And touched, as surely as if we touched
The warm and golden skin of a woman
With the hands of men famished for love
We touched
Liberty.

1940

LETTERS (1946)

In this autumn night
I am filled with your words,
Words durable as time, or matter,
Words bluff as the hand,
Words scintillant as stars.
From your heart, your head, your flesh,
Your words have come to me,
Words charged with your being,
Words of a mother
Words of a wife
Words of a lover,
O they were noble, heroic,
Your words were Men.

*

They've got us.
We are in prison,
I within walls
You in the world. . . .
But what matter what happens to us.
What's worse
Is to carry your prison within you.
Whether they know it or not
So many men there are
So many, honest, hard-working, true,
Whom one could love as I love you.

*

Indescribable, they say,
The misery of Istanbul,
Famine mows down the people, they say,
Tuberculosis is their shroud, they say,
And little chits of girls—you know (they say)
Haunt the waste-lots and the cinema-booths. . . .

Bad news of my far city,
City of staunch men, labourers, poor,
The Istanbul I know,
The city where you live, my love,
City I carry with me on my back
From exile to exile, prison to prison,
City that I bear like a knife in my heart
And like your image in my eyes.

*

Some few carnations still grow in the pots.
But in the plain the land is already ploughed.
They are sowing grain, and the olives are gathered in.
Against the winter they dig from the garden beds
The spring-cuttings. And I, dark with your absence,
Loaded with impatience for enormous journeys,
Wait in Brusa, like a freight at anchor.

*

Over the roof of my distant city
Across the floor of the Sea of Marmora
Over the autumn lands
Your voice, so warm, so rich,
Reaches across to me.
Three minutes that lasted, before
The telephone sank into silence.

*

All of a sudden the snow
Fallen upon us unaware in the night.

Morning begins with the crows
Printing their black against the branches' white.

Winter stone-blind in the plain of Brusa,
Or the visible image of the Infinite.

That's how it is, my love,
After the long slow struggles underground.

The season changes with a bound
But in the dark earth, stubborn and unstemmed
Life is still on the move.

•

Both of us, we know it all, my love,
Yes, they have taught us well,
To suffer hunger and cold,
To be wracked with weariness,
To have to live apart.

We are not yet reduced to killing
Nor has it happened to us yet to die.
But we know it all, my darling,
We can teach others now
How to fight for Our humanity,
How to love a little more each day,
Each day a little better.

•

What is she doing now,
Now, in this instant?
At home? In the street? At work?
Lying down? Standing up?
Perhaps she lifts an arm?
And oh! my rose
How that chance movement suddenly reveals
The white and rondure of your wrist!

What is she doing now,
Now, in this instant?
There's a kitten on her knee:
She strokes it. Or perhaps
She is walking. See, one foot
Goes forward . . . O your feet,
Feet that in my soul
Are walking ever, feet of light
That carry my black days!

What does she think of now?
Of me? Or . . . how should I know?
Of beans which refuse to cook?
Or maybe she asks herself
Why so many men on earth
Are so unhappy.
What
Is she doing now, what is she doing
Now, in this instant?

ABOUT HANDS AND THE GREAT LIE

Your hands are solemn as stones
And have an air of sadness like prison-songs
Slow and massive as beasts of burden
Your hands are like the wild faces of famished children

Your hands are light, competent as bees,
Capacious as breasts full of milk,
Intrepid as nature herself
Your hands whose rough skin hides such tender affections

Not between the horns of a bull does our planet hang
It hangs between your hands
Ah, Humankind, Our Kind
Above all those of Asia
of Africa
of the Middle and Near East
of the Pacific Islands
and those of my own country
In fact, more than seventy per cent of all humanity
You are asleep, you are old
like your hands
And you are enquiring, enchanted too, you are full of youth
like your hands

Ah, Humankind, Our Kind
My brother in Europe, or America
You are nimble, you are daring,
But you are feckless as your hands
They are lying to you
They lead you by the nose too easily

Ah, Humankind, Our Kind
If they lie, those radio aerials
If they lie, those printing presses
If they lie, all those books
the notice on the wall
If they lie, the proclamation on the pillar
If they lie on the screen
those naked legs of cover-girls
If the sense of sin
the cradle-song
the dream
the café violinist
and the moonlight of hectic nights
are all lies
If the word is a lie
the colour a lie
the voice a lie
If he who exploits your hands is lying
If all the world and everything in it is a lie
With the exception of your hands
That's so that they may be obedient as clay
blind as the shadows
silly as the sheepdog

And so that they do not revolt, your hands,
And so that an end be not made of this injustice
This domination of the merchants of death
Throughout our mortal world
This world which is still worth the trouble of living.

1941

MENELAOS LOUDEMIS

Letter to the Sick Poet

(Menelaos Loudemis, poet and prose-writer, now interned in the concentration camp of Makronisos, wrote this poem to Nazim Hikmet in reply to his poem ANGINA PECTORIS, *which had somehow got through to Makronisos.)*

Nazim Hikmet, comrade, co-habiter of hell:
Yesterday I heard you groaning for Greece.
It was night, the hour was bitter,
and your groan leaned on our chests.

It was the hour when we bound our wounds,
and we lifted the bandage that we might hear you
groaning—from the little dungeon of Istanbul—
into all the dungeons of the world.

Now Nazim, I can tell you,
now that they have narrowed the world for me,
now that I have tasted the rust of the chains,
Now, Nazim, I can tell you:
On the right bracelet of my handcuff
I feel your hand, Nazim, my brother, in the same prison death.

Unexpected, last night, your letter reached us here,
like a bird that had flown from its cage,
like a hand that had reached out of the waves.
Trembling we read it, syllable by syllable,
beneath the sabre of the half-moon.
And we took the oath:
to embroider on your garment the seal of Makronisos,
and to acclaim you honorary martyr and fellow-inmate.

Here our prison is roofless, all open,
a place of precipices belted by a pitchy gloom,
and on it move skeletons, erect.

How did your poem manage to find us?
Here nothing else has anchored, never—
only the executioners and the north winds.
How did your poem manage to find the way?

What has happened in my land, comrade,
never happened before anywhere else on earth.
Nor can it be spoken, nor recorded.
Only this I say to you, Nazim: the infants,
the infants who never in a hundred years wept
for anyone else but for themselves,
the infants in their cradles are wailing a dirge
for the untold sufferings of their parents.
Only this I say to you, Nazim, and I would like to cry it out,
but my candle droops its head on the candlestick
and weeps for itself.

Now good-night, Nazim, and tomorrow at dawn,
at dawn here, there, everywhere, when we strip off our chains,
I will come to find you.
I will take the liner and come to Istanbul to meet you.
And you will see me on deck waving my kerchief,
and you will come up to welcome me.
Then we shall embrace as brothers,
and we shall saunter on the earth where I was born.
And if you have a mother, if you have a mother, comrade,
I will bend to kiss the hand
of her who gave life to the brother I needed.
And if you have a brother,
I will ask him to lend me your name.
And if you have a son,
I will place in the palm of his hand,
the hand of my little girl.

And if you have no one,
if you have no one, comrade, no one,
then I will show you little Turkish boys sweating at the pier
with a kindred sweat;
mothers who walk up-hill in grief,
little boys stiff with the cold outside store windows.
I will show you thousands of our mothers, brothers and children.

And together we will take the oath of Sleepless Wrath:
never to laugh, if we do not laugh together,
never to sing,
if the world's tears do not end.

And now, forgive me comrade. The sentry comes closer,
and my candle has died on the stone. Lift life on high!

I greet you with the call of Makronisos.

Your brother,
MENELAOS LOUDEMIS.

(Translated from the Greek by Rae Dalven)

Room Four Hundred

Resurrection from the dead is a somewhat peculiar affair. So peculiar as to baffle description. The world is attractive on a beautiful day when you've had a good sleep. But this is as though the day had been more beautiful and you had slept better than ever before. You think you know the stage of life well. But this is as though the technicians had switched all the lights on with clear glass and suddenly showed you the stage setting fully lit up. You think you've had a good look. But this is as though you had put a telescope to your eye and then added a microscope. Resurrection from the dead is an entirely spring event, and like the spring shows you unsuspected magic even in the most familiar surroundings.

And this is even the case when you know that it is only for a moment. It is even the case when your surroundings are as pleasant and opulent as a Pankrác cell.

One day, however, they even bring you back to the world. One day they call you for interrogation even without a stretcher—and although you think it's impossible, you manage somehow. The corridor has a railing, the staircase has banisters, you go in fact more on all fours than on your two legs, and down below your fellow-prisoners take you in charge and bring you right to the prison lorry. Then you sit, ten, twelve people in a dark travelling cell, new faces smile at you and you smile at them, somebody whispers something to you and you don't know who it is, you press somebody's hand and you don't know whose it is—then the lorry suddenly lurches into the entrance to Petschek Palace, the comrades carry you, you enter into spacious rooms with bare walls, five benches one behind the other with people sitting to attention on them, their hands on their knees, looking motionlessly at the empty wall in front of them . . . and that, my lad, is a piece of your new world, called the cinema.

MAY DAY INTERMEZZO 1943

Today is May Day, 1943. And the warden who's on duty is safe, so I can write. What luck! To be once again a Communist jour-

nalist for a while on this day, and write a report on a May Day parade of the fighting forces of the new world!

Don't expect to hear about streaming banners. There was nothing like that. I cannot even tell you about stirring deeds which are so good to listen to. Everything today was much simpler. Not the boisterous, explosive wave of tens of thousands which I have seen in other years streaming through the streets of Prague, not the glorious sea of millions which I have seen deluging the Red Square in Moscow. Here you can see neither millions nor hundreds. Here you see only a few comrades, men and women. And yet, you feel, it is not less. It is not, because this is a review of the strength which at this very moment is going through the fiercest fire, changing not into ashes but into steel. A review in the trenches during battle. And in the trenches field-grey is worn.

Everything is contained in little things like this. Who knows if you will understand this at all, you who will one day read this and who have never lived it. But try to understand it. Believe me, there is strength in it

The morning greeting from the neighbouring cell which taps out two bars from Beethoven is today more festive, more emphatic, and the wall interprets it with higher tones.

We put on the best we have. It is the same in all the cells.

We are already in full rig-out when breakfast comes. In front of the open cell door file the orderlies with bread, black coffee and water. Comrade Skorepa issues three small loaves of bread instead of two. That is his greeting for May Day: an active greeting from an attentive soul. And under the loaves finger presses finger. Speaking is forbidden, even your eyes are watched—but cannot dumb people speak distinctly enough with their fingers?

In the courtyard under the window of our cell the women are running out to the morning half-hour. I climb on to the table and look down through the iron bars. Perhaps they will catch sight of me. They have. And they're raising their fists in greeting. I return the greeting. Down below in the court today things are alive, absolutely different, more joyously alive than on other days. The wardress doesn't see anything, or even perhaps doesn't want to see anything. And that too belongs to this year's May Day parade.

Now comes our half-hour. I lead the exercises. It's the First of May, comrades, today we start differently, even if the guards are surprised. First exercise, one, two, one, two, hammer blows. And second exercise: mowing. Hammer and scythe. With a spot of imagination the comrades will perhaps understand. Hammer and sickle. I look around. They smile and repeat the exercises with

verve. They have understood. There, comrades, that's our May Day meeting, and this pantomime—that's our May Day promise that even if it means death we remain loyal.

Back in the cell. Nine o'clock. Now the clock on the Kremlin is striking ten and the parade on the Red Square is just beginning. Dad, we go with them! They're singing the International there now, at this moment the International is sounding forth all over the world, let it sound in our cell as well. We sing. And then one revolutionary song after another peals forth, for we don't want to be alone, we aren't alone, we belong to those who are now singing freely, in freedom, but equally much in the fight as we . . .

Comrades in prisons,
In cold torture-chambers,
You with us, you with us,
Though you are not in our columns . . .

Yes, we with you.

That's how we in cell 267 planned the triumphant conclusion of our May Day parade, 1943. But is it really the end? What about that woman orderly from the women's department who is walking through the court this afternoon and whistling the Red Army March and the Partisans' Song and other Soviet songs to encourage the men in their cells? And what about that man in the uniform of a Czech policeman who brought me pencil and paper and who is now on guard in the corridor to make sure no intruder catches me writing. And what about that other man who really started me off on this writing, who takes these pages away and carefully hides them so that they can appear in the world at the right time? They'd pay with their heads for this piece of paper. They're risking their lives to be a bridge between today with its prison bars and tomorrow's freedom. They're fighting. They're fighting devotedly and fearlessly in their places, as the lie of the land dictates, and with all the means at their disposal. And they're absolutely unassuming and inconspicuous, and so completely without pathos, so that you wouldn't know anything of the life-and-death struggle in which they're on the side of their friends and in which they stand an equal chance of going under as of winning through.

Ten times, twenty times, you've seen the army of the revolution march by at May Day parades, and it was glorious. But it is only in the struggle that you appreciate the real strength of this army and how indestructible it is. Death is simpler than you had thought, and heroism has no halo. But the struggle is still more cruel than you had imagined, and to stick it out and carry it

through to victory—that requires immeasurable strength. Every day you see it in motion, but not always are you fully conscious of it. Everything seems so much a matter of course.

Today you have once again been conscious of it.

At the May Day parade, 1943.

May Day, 1943, has temporarily interrupted the flow of this narration. It is well so. On festival days one remembers things rather differently, and perhaps the joy which dominates this day would distort my memories.

And the "cinema" in Petschek Palace is certainly nothing joyous. It is the ante-room to a torture-chamber from which you hear other comrades' groans and cries of horror, and you don't know what awaits you. You see people go out from here healthy, strong and full of life, and after two or three hours of questioning return mutilated and broken. You hear a loud voice reporting for interrogation—and an hour later a broken voice, stifled with pain and fever, reporting its owner's return. And something still worse: you see people going off with a serene, straight look, but unable to look you in the eye when they return. Somewhere up there in the interrogation room, there was maybe one single moment of weakness, one instant of indecision perhaps, one glimmer of fear or longing to preserve one's ego—and today or tomorrow new people will come here and live through all the horrors from the beginning, new people whom a comrade in the struggle has surrendered to the enemy.

The spectacle of people whose conscience is troubled is more terrible than the spectacle of people who have been physically tortured. And if you have eyes washed clear by death stalking around, and if you have feelings embittered by resurrection from the dead, you know by instinct, without words, who has wavered, who has perhaps even turned traitor, or who in some corner of his soul has thought that it perhaps wouldn't be so bad if he were to give himself some slight relief and inform on the least important of his fellow-fighters. You poor faint-hearts! How can that still be called life which is bought with the life of a comrade?

This wasn't perhaps my first reflection when I sat in the "cinema" for the first time. But it often returned to me there. And it certainly made its appearance once again this morning in somewhat changed surroundings—in surroundings which were a most vivid source of knowledge: "Room 400."

I did not sit for long in the "cinema". An hour perhaps, perhaps one and a half hours. Then I heard my name called behind my back. Then two civilians, speaking in Czech, took charge of

me, conducted me to the lift and up to the fourth floor until we came to a large room on whose door was the number

400

To begin with, I sat there completely alone under their supervision, right at the back on an isolated chair near the wall, and looked around me with the strange feeling of a man who has the impression that he has already lived through what is happening once before. Have I been here before? No. And yet I know it. I know this place, I've dreamed about it, I had such a cruel, feverish dream about it, which deformed it, distorted it horribly, but still could not make it unrecognisable. Now it is friendly, full of the light of day and clear colours, and through the large lightly-latticed windows can be seen the Tyn Church, the green Letná and the Hradcany. In my dream it was gloomy, without windows, dusted with a dirty yellow light in which the people were like shadows. Yes, there were people here. Now it's empty and their six benches, set closely one behind the other, form a cheerful meadow of dandelions and buttercups. In my dream it was full of people sitting here on the benches one beside the other, and their faces were pale and blood-stained. And there, right close to the door, stood a man with sorrowful eyes, in blue working clothes, longing to drink, drink, and then he slowly sank to the ground like a falling curtain . . .

Yes, that's how it was, but now I know, it wasn't a dream. That cruel and feverish experience—that was reality.

That was on the night of my arrest and first cross-examination. They brought me here perhaps three times, perhaps ten times—how do I know how often?—when they wanted a rest or when they set to work on others. I was barefoot, and the tiled floors pleasantly cooled the bruised soles of my feet, that I remember.

A prisoner and loneliness—these two ideas usually go together. But that is a great mistake. A prisoner is not alone, prison is a great collective, and not even the strictest isolation can tear anybody away from it unless he excludes himself. The brotherhood of the oppressed is here submitted to pressure which concentrates it, strengthens it and makes it more sensitive. It penetrates through walls that live, speak and transmit signals. It embraces all the cells in one corridor which are linked together by common suffering, by common service, by the same orderlies and by the half-hours together in the open air, when a word or a gesture is sufficient to convey some news or save a human life. It unites the entire prison through the journeys made in common to cross-examination, through the time spent together

sitting in the "cinema" and returning together. It is a brotherhood of few words and great deeds because the mere pressure of a hand or a cigarette secretly handed on break the cage into which you have been cast and liberate you from the loneliness which might break you. Cells have hands; you feel how they keep you from giving way when you return in agony from an interrogation, they feed you when others are hounding you to death with hunger. Cells have eyes; they look at you when you go away to your execution and you know that you must go straight because you are their brother and you must not weaken them by a single irresolute step. It is a brotherhood that sheds blood but is indomitable. If it were not for its help, you wouldn't be able to bear the tenth part of your destiny, neither you nor any of the others.

The term, "Room 400", which appears at the head of this chapter, will often recur in the course of this story if I am able to finish it (for we know neither the day nor the hour). I got to know it as a room, and my first hours in it and my first reflections in it were not pleasant ones. But it was not a room—it was a collective. A joyous, fighting collective.

It started in 1940 when the anti-Communist department had its work greatly increased. It was a branch of the "house prison", the "cinema", a branch of the waiting-room for those due to be interrogated, destined for Communists, to avoid their having to be brought from the ground floor to the fourth floor for every question, to keep them continuously within reach of the interrogating officials of the Gestapo. It was a labour-saving device—that was the idea of it.

But put two prisoners together—especially if they are Communists—and in five minutes you have a collective frustrating all plans. By 1942 it had no other name than "The Communist Centre." It underwent many changes, and thousands and thousands of comrades, men and women, followed each other on its benches. But one thing in it did not change: the spirit of the collective, devoted to the struggle and confident of victory.

Room 400 was a trench thrust deep into hostile territory, surrounded by the enemy on all sides and subjected to concentrated firing, but never for one moment contemplating surrender. Over it flew the Red Flag. But it expressed the solidarity of the entire nation fighting for its liberation.

Down below, in the "cinema", SS-guards patrolled in jackboots shouting at you each time you so much as blinked. Here, in Room 400, those responsible for guarding the prisoners were Czech inspectors and agents from Police Headquarters who had

entered the service of the Gestapo as translators, either voluntarily or on the orders of their superiors, and who performed their duties either as servants of the Gestapo or—as Czechs. Or as something between the two. Here you did not have to sit to attention with your hands on your knees and your eyes fixed straight ahead, here you could sit more freely, you could look about you, you could make signs with your hands—and you could do even more, according as to which of the three types of inspector was on duty.

Room 400 was a place where you got the profoundest insight into the animal known as man. The proximity of death stripped each person naked, both those who wore on their left arm the red insignia of Communists under interrogation or of persons suspected of collaborating with Communists, and those who had guard duty and who sometimes attended the cross-questioning in the nearby room. There, during a cross examination, words could be a shield or a weapon. But here, in Room 400, there was no hiding behind words. What counted here was not what you said but what was in you. And in you remained only what was fundamental. Everything subsidiary, mitigating, weakening or embellishing the foundations of your character, fell away, ravished by the hurricane that precedes death. There remained only the bare subject and predicate: the loyal resist, the traitor betrays, the petty-souled despairs, the hero fights. In every person there is strength and weakness, courage and fear, steadfastness and vacillation, cleanliness and dirt. But here only one or the other could remain. Either—or. And if anybody tried inconspicuously to balance between the two, he was more conspicuous than a person who dances in a funeral procession with a yellow feather stuck in his hat and cymbals in his hands.

There were such people among the prisoners, there were also such people among the Czech inspectors and agents. During an interrogation they burnt a candle to their lord god of the Reich and in Room 400 they burnt another to the Bolshevik devil. In front of the German commissar they knocked out your teeth to hammer out of you the name of your contact, and in Room 400 they became so friendly as to offer you bread to stave off your hunger. During a house search they looted your whole flat and in Room 400 they handed you half a cigarette from their booty to show you how they sympathised with you. Others—and these were merely a somewhat different variety of the same type—never harmed you on their own initiative and helped you still less. They thought always and only of their own little skins. Their sensitivity changed them into excellent political barometers. Are

they very stiff and official? You can be sure the Germans are advancing on Stalingrad. Are they affable and ready to talk with the prisoners? The situation is favourable: the Germans are evidently being thrown back at Stalingrad. Do they begin to tell you about their old Czech family and how they were ordered into the service of the Gestapo? Splendid: the Red Army is evidently already advancing beyond Rostov. Others again of this kind stick their hands in their pockets when you are drowning and willingly give you a hand when you climb out on to the bank by yourself.

Inspectors of this type were conscious of the collective of Room 400 and strove to associate with it because they appreciated its strength, but they never belonged to it. And there was another type which was totally unaware of the collective: I would call them murderers, but a murderer belongs to the human family. Czech-speaking beasts with sticks in their hands, torturing Czech prisoners to such an extent that even many German commissars would shrink from the sight of it. They could not even be so hypocritical as to claim any interest in their nation or the Reich. They tortured and murdered out of delight, they bashed away at teeth and ear-drums, they crushed eyes, kicked at the sexual organs, uncovered the brain of those they tortured and beat them to death out of sheer cruelty and for no other reason. Every day you saw them, every day you had to be in contact with them and endure their presence, which filled the whole air with blood and shouting; and your only help was your firm belief that they would not be able to evade justice even if they murdered all the witnesses of their crimes.

And sitting side by side with them at the same table, apparently belonging in the same category, were people who ought in justice to be written with a capital P—people who from prison provisions built up provision for the prisoners, people who helped to create the collective of Room 400 and who belonged to it with all their heart and all their courage. Their greatness is all the more remarkable in that they were not Communists, that, on the contary, they had formerly worked for the Czech police against the Communists but had recognised the strength of the Communists and realised their significance for the nation when they saw them in the struggle against the occupation, and from that moment had faithfully served and helped everybody who remained loyal even when on the prison bench. Many fighters outside would have hesitated if they had had any idea of the horrors that awaited them when once they fell into the hands of the Gestapo. These here had these horrors continously before

their eyes, every day, every hour. Every day and every hour they could expect to be set side by side with the other prisoners and subjected to a still harder test than they. And yet they did not waver. They helped to save the lives of thousands and lighten the destiny of those whose lives they could not save. To them belongs the title of hero. Without their aid Room 400 could never have been what it became and as thousands of Communists knew it: a place of light in a dark house, a trench in the enemy's rear, a centre of the fight for freedom in the very den of the occupants.

(*Translated from the Czech by Stephen Jolly.*)

PAUL ELUARD

On the Human Scale

To the memory of Colonel Fabien
and to Laurent Casanova
who has spoken to me so well of him.

They have killed a man
A man a great child
In a huge landscape
A spot of blood
Like a setting sun
A man crowned
With women and children
An ideal flower of man
For our eternity

He has fallen
And his heart became empty
His eyes empty
His head empty
His hands curled open
Without complaint
As he believed in the well-being
Of others
As he had repeated
"I love you" in every key
To his mother his protector
Partaker in his world his ally
To life itself

And he went to the fight
Against the tormentors of his kin
Against the concept of *enemy*

And the days at their worst
He would still deal gently with his distress

It was his nature to love
And set store by life
His nature was like my own

Nothing except a single flare-up of courage
Nothing except the people's might
And "I love you" comes to a bad end
But he is an affirmation of life
"I love you" was the Spain
Which struggled for the sun
But is now the map of Paris
With its road not yet of age
With its gentle children
And the first act of outrage
Against the soldiers of evil
Against the death of disgrace
It is also the first light
In the night of the wretched
Light which is always first
Always perfect
A light of connection
Sphere more and more pliant
Extended and brought to life
Seed and flower and fruit and seed
"I love you" ends happily
For the men of tomorrow

(*Translated by Arthur Boyars*)

NAZIM HIKMET

THIS LAND IS OURS

This land the shape of a wild mare's head
Come at the gallop out of distant Asia
To plunge into the Mediterranean
This is our land
Bloodstained fists, worn teeth, bare feet,
Carpet of soil like coconut matting
This hell, our paradise
That the gates be shut to the imperialists
That they remain shut forever
That men may cease to be slaves of men
This is our challenge
To live like a tree, single and free,
To live in brotherhood like the trees of a forest
This is our longing

1948

Early Blossom

WHEN Tiger was fifteen years old they jerked him out of his youth by marrying him off. Tiger didn't know anything about the marriage until his *bap* told him about it. And when he heard his heart bowed in oriental fashion. A match had been made.

A week before the ceremony he was painted with a mixed paste to clean and prepare his body for married life. Every night and every morning five or six close relatives of the family came to rub him down.

On the morning of the wedding he bathed. They dressed him in the wedding gown, put a crown on his head. His *bap* said, "These people not so rich, so you mustn't stay too long to eat at the feast."

At the back of the *doolahine's* house a great tent of bamboo and coconut branches had been erected. Five goats and six sheep had been slaughtered, an extravagance the bride's family could only afford at a wedding ceremony.

Tiger looked at everything and everybody with a tight feeling in his throat. He wished he knew more about what was going to happen to him.

When the *purdah* had been thrown over the couple it was only then that Tiger saw the little girl who was to become his wife. Under the white sheet he had to rub a red powder through the path in the middle of her head. As he did this he looked at her. She must have been about his age. She had black, sad eyes. long hair, flat breasts.

"What you name?" he asked breathlessly.

"Urmila," the girl whispered timidly.

Tiger didn't think: I shall have to look at this face for the rest of my life. This whole affair was arranged for me; I didn't have a thing to do with it. Can she cook? He didn't ask himself if she knew anything about what boys and girls did when they got married because he didn't know himself. He was aware of a painful exhilaration; painful because neither of them understood, exhilarating because it was something different in his monotonous life.

They offered him a cow and a hut in Barataria and two hundred dollars in cash. He didn't know where Barataria was. He didn't know what to expect, or whether he should refuse to eat and wait for more gifts. With a cow and a hut, would they be happy? And then on a sudden impulse—perhaps it was fear, uncertainty—he took up a piece of *meetai* and bit it. That ended the offerings. Afterwards his *bap* caught him alone for a minute and hissed: "You fool! You could have gettan plenty more thing! You eatam too quick, stupid boy!"

But it didn't matter to Tiger. Vaguely, like morning mist, he found himself wondering what life was going to be like.

As was the custom, the *doolahine* had to spend three days at the bridegroom's home, then her brother would come for the couple and they would spend three days with her family. After that, they could go and live in their own house.

When Tiger had handed over Urmila to his *mai,* all the little boys and girls from the neighbourhood came up and started to call out to him.

"Tiger! So you married now!"

"You is a big man now, boy!"

His *bap* and a few of the older folk drove them away. Tiger would have liked for them to come. He was familiar with them, he could make jokes and talk. But now he was a man. He would have to learn to be a man, he would have to forget his friends. After all, he thought, they were still little children.

But in the next three days his mind was in a turmoil. He went out into the canefields where he had toiled with his father. Wind blew strongly here; he liked to lift his head and smell the smell of burnt canes. What had life been for him? Days in the fields, evenings playing with the other children under the mango tree, roti and *aloo* in the night. Sometimes they sang songs. His father had a drum and when it was Saturday night the neighbours came and they drank and sang. And now all that was gone. He felt a tremendous responsibility falling on his shoulders. He tried not to think about it.

The third day his mind was in a riotous fever. He sat in the yard under the mango tree with Ramlal, an old sagacious man who often consoled him when he was beaten by his father or mother.

"What I must do?" he asked Ramlal with a troubled voice.

Ramlal asked him what he meant.

"I mean—I don't know what to do when I go with my *doolahine.*"

"What boy! Never seeam your *bap* and *mai* when they sleeping in the night?"

"Hai—"

"Well, is that self. You doam same thing. You gettam house which side Barataria, gettam land, a cow—well, you go live that side. Haveam plenty boy child—girl child no good, useless. You live that side, plantam rice, bodi, reap crop. Live good."

Thus in a few words Ramlal summed up the years for Tiger. Tiger thought. And this new world burst like an exploding sandbox seed in his mind. It was painful, and exhilarating, like the wedding ceremony. But for Tiger there was no sexual excitement at the thought that he would be alone with Urmila. Ramlal's advice struck no quivering chord in his body, no responding challenge. Even when he had looked at the face of his bride under the *purdah,* there had been no wakening of desire, no stirring of unused muscle. For to Tiger everything was a whirling, swiftly-acted drama, in which he was told to do this, and do that, and he obeyed like a dog.

So the three days passed, and then three days and nights again at Urmila's parents. It was good, Tiger felt, this putting off of the unknown, this stretching of the few days before the overwhelming river burst over its banks and swept him off his immature feet.

It was evening time in Barataria. A cow moaned in a field nearby. Someone was playing a radio—there were radios and electric lights for those who could afford—but the music did not suit the time, or the environs. It was a jazz song, jarring on the quietude. Across the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway—that long stretch of smooth asphalt on which motorists delight to hit seventy, eighty, and tell themselves the British Government could never build a road like it—the sun sank splendidly in a pool of red, saffron, deep purple, and the coconut trees behind the land which Tiger was to buy later cast long, last shadows.

Tiger lit a fire of green bush so that the smoke could drive away the mosquitoes. Then he milked the cow under the rose mango tree. Urmila watched from the kitchen window, a child-like expression in her dark eyes. They had hardly exchanged any words since leaving Chaguanas in the bus. They had come to the hut, went about putting away things like two people who did not know each other.

There were two chairs, a small table, some cooking utensils. The hut wasn't divided in rooms. The floor was smooth mud. The walls were plastered with mud, and here and there a bunch of dry grass showed out of the plaster.

When Urmila tried to lift the massala stone to put it in the

shack which was the kitchen, she found it was too heavy. She turned shyly to her husband and asked him to lift it for her. It was the first time she had spoken directly to him. Urmila swept out the floor with a *cocoyea* broom, put wood in the earthen fireplace, and went to catch water at the standpipe near the corner of the road. And when it was evening they ate roti and *bigan* in silence. Tiger chewed slowly, tasting the food. At least she could cook, he told himself.

After the meal he sat on the floor with his legs drawn up under him. " Get my cigarettes for me," he commanded.

Urmila hastened to obey.

Tiger had never smoked. His father used a *chillum* pipe, and all the old men.

But he had decided he was not going to appear a small boy before his wife. Men smoked: he would smoke. He would drink rum, curse, swear, bully the life out of her if she did not obey him. Hadn't he learned, watching his father and mother? And didn't he know what to do when they went to bed? But he refused to think much about later, in the bed. Unknowingness folded about him like a cloak so he couldn't breathe. He was afraid.

Urmila handed him the cigarettes and matches. He pulled one out the pack clumsily, beat the end on the box of matches. He put it between his lips and lit it and inhaled.

All this time Urmila was fascinatedly looking at him. And when Tiger began to cough so that his eyes ran water she knew. Ordinarily she would not have dared to laugh. But her emotions were too tightly drawn, like ropes across her breasts. And she had a vague feeling that if she laughed the tautness in her would snap and set her free.

It flashed in Tiger's mind that this was rudeness, and that he should slap her into respect for him when she laughed. And then the humour of the situation broadened like a ring in a pond and pushed other thoughts out of its path. Tightness in Tiger exploded as he burst into a fit of laughter. They laughed until they felt less afraid of each other The joke of the cigarette was just a starter; the rest of their laughter was to drown out uncertainty, fear, the knowledge that they would do something soon which they had never done before. And after they laughed, for the first time the thought gave them a thrill.

Urmila moved away uneasily; Tiger ground the cigarette in the ground.

That night they slept separately on sugar bags spread on the floor. Tiger crept across the room and huddled up in the corner

by himself, afraid of his thoughts and wishing with all his heart that he could fall asleep. Urmila cried silently in the bags she had folded as a pillow.

That first night Tiger must have slept soundly. When he got up Urmila had already milked the cow and was kneading flour to make roti.

"Good morning," she said shyly when he went into the kitchen. Tiger's white teeth gleamed, but he didn't answer. He went out into the yard to cut a *datwan* from the hibiscus fence. He chewed at the end of the branch and scrubbed his teeth when it frazzled out. He dipped a calabash full of water from the cement barrel and gargled noisily.

He decided that he had better begin to talk freely with his wife. That way she wouldn't know he was doubtful and fearful of the future.

"Now so, Urmila, what you doing home by you?" he asked when they sat on the floor to breakfast.

Words came tumbling from the girl like water from a burst dam. "Oh Tiger, I have much work to do. I clean the house, I cook, I go out to graze the cattle."

The boy husband said: "Yes, me too, girl. Plenty things to do by my father house. Every day I have to go in the fields and work, work. In the evening we play. Boysie, Dolly, Ramnath and the other children come, and we play in the yard by the mango tree. I wish I was back home now."

Urmila said: "But Tiger, we married now. We can't go back to we father and mother house. We have to live here by we self."

Tiger drank tea from a large enamel cup. "Yes, I know that. Don't think I don't know. You must remember, first thing is that I is the man in the house, and you have to obey me."

Urmila said quickly: "Yes Tiger."

Later, when the sun was high in the sky, and the wind was warm and constant, Tiger said he was going to rent a piece of land by the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway.

"We will make a garden there," he told Urmila. "We will grow many crops, and sell them in the market."

"Do you know where the man live?" she asked.

"No," he replied, "but I will find out."

He left with fifty dollars. He caught a bus on the eastern main road and travelled to San Juan. It was easy to find Mr. Rodriguez, the rich landowner. Everybody in San Juan knew where he lived. Tiger signed a contract to rent two lots of land for five years, at the end of which time the contract could be renewed if he

desired. Altogether the negotiations cost him forty-two dollars. He couldn't reckon if this was good business. He would have liked to have asked one of his uncles to go with him, or even his father. But they would have had to travel all the way from Chaguanas. Besides, he felt ashamed. After all, he was married. He might as well learn to do things without the assistance of other people.

When he got back to Barataria it was evening. He dropped off by the corner of the main road. The rumshop was opened, and he got an idea. The same spur which had made him light a cigarette the night before now tickled him to get drunk. Only men got drunk; not boys. He remembered once in Chaguanas his father was drinking in a rumshop and he had to go and bring him home. When his father saw him he said: "Ohe *betah,* come an' take a little one. It will kill all the germs in your belly." And he had timidly taken the drink, urged by his father's laughing companions. It coursed down his throat as if pitchoil had been soaked in his mouth and a match set to it so that the flame ran from the tip of his tongue down his throat to his belly. The men had laughed loudly when tears sprang involuntarily to his eyes.

Now, when he went into the shop and ordered a drink, men looked at him briefly and went on talking and drinking. He stood with the glass in his hand and looked around. Acutely conscious that the men were not looking at him, he gulped the rum with a tremendous effort and chased it with a soda water. It would have been better then if all of them had put down their glasses, ceased the chatter and pierced him with their eyes all at once. That way he might have bucked up his courage and said something to show them he was a man, that he could swallow the fiery brown liquid.

But no one cared whether Tiger was a man or not.

Warmth started to travel over his body; his brain ticked pleasantly. He went across to a dirty table around which two young men were sitting. There was a slop-pail near by and one of them was leaning from his chair and spitting in it.

"You living in Barataria?" Tiger asked.

"Yes man, we living in Barataria for two years. You want some thing?" one of them asked.

The question embarrassed Tiger. He didn't want anything only people to talk to. "No," he said, "is just that I newly come here to live. I don't know the place good yet, you see."

The men had been drinking from a big black bottle. They were in good spirits, the bottle was empty, and here was a boy

who looked like if he had money playing man. They had seen him change a five dollar bill at the bar.

"Sit down, man," they invited, "have a liquor with we."

One of them reached forward and tilted the bottle. It was empty, he pointed out ruefully.

The chance to prove he was a man. "Call for another bottle on me, man," Tiger said, pulling a bill from his pocket, "all of we is Indian together, let we drink and make merry."

Tiger's brain sailed vast seas of knowledge as he drank, touching different shores of thought. He couldn't understand how he felt. It was a good feeling, a big manly feeling. And impulses stirred in him. He wanted to do all a man could do. Already he owned land, he boasted to his companions. He had a house, a cattle, a wife. When he spoke of Urmila he glowed. Passion stirred uneasily, seeking an outlet which was not yet there, pounding away at his chest. He would have done it last night, only he couldn't summon up his manliness. But now—now was the time. Tonight he would show her. Nobody had told him he was still a boy, but they didn't have to speak for him to know.

And suddenly he felt revulsion for the two men drinking with him. He was feeling giddy. Somewhere he had lost the trail of conversation, couldn't get back. He stood up with a curse and abruptly left the table. He staggered home while a little reason remained in his whirling head, a dollar remaining in his pocket.

Urmila had lit the kerosene lamp and was waiting anxiously. Through the fog in his brain he could see fear in her eyes.

"Why you stay so long Tiger?" she asked gladly.

He sulked. He was the man in the house, he could come and go as he pleased. He didn't answer.

They ate supper in silence. Tiger watched Urmila covertly from the corner of his eyes. Now that he had decided to do it, she appeared altogether different. He saw her hair glossy in the lamplight, her eyes shining. A thrill shot down his back, shot back to his head. Vaguely, he wondered if Urmila would feel those sensations if she knew. But perhaps it was different with women. He didn't know. He wished that he knew more about everything—about planting crops at the right time, about living in a house with a woman, and the right way to go about the thing later.

The meal cleared his head somewhat, bringing back uncertainty and fear, but he thought quickly, I am a man, I must be a man. In some way he had sensed that unless he did this thing, he would never cease to be a boy, to be treated like a boy.

Later they sat silently on the floor. Urmila was shelling pidgeon peas she had bought from a passing vendor for the next day's lunch He watched her. Did he have to tell her first? The thought embarrassed him. He lit a cigarette for himself and coughed halfway through it.

They went to bed. For a long time Tiger lay there looking up at the ceiling of the hut. Then quietly, breathlessly, like he was stalking a deer, he drew his bags near to his bride.

Urmila moved and opened her eyes. She knew what was going to happen and she tried not to be afraid. Her *mai* had said, *"Beti,* whatever happen, don't frighten. You is a woman now." And the mother had taken it for granted that she knew everything about it, and what she didn't know she would learn as the gods decreed.

It was the same thing with Urmila. She felt she had to prove herself a woman in front of Tiger.

Young passion burst and swept them so they didn't know really what they were doing. If Tiger had known that this powerful force was going to grip them so that they wouldn't be their fearful selves, it would have been so easy for him to let himself die and switch on the force, he thought. Because afterwards he was aware that he of his own accord had taken no part in the thing. A great desire for his wife had come over him, possessing his very brain. He kept thinking about the force responsible for what they had done. Before they fell asleep in each other's arms he told himself that the next time he would just die and let the power do its work.

And the next morning they lay lazily on the bags on the floor looking at each other with the wonder of the new knowledge. and for the first time there was tenderness in their eyes.

(II) SAMUEL SELVON

The Great Drought

In the tiny village of Las Lomas, out in his vegetable garden, Manko licked dry lips and raised heavy eyes to the merciless sky. Somewhere in the field a cow mooed mournfully. sniffing around for a bit of green in the parched, cracked earth.

Manko had never seen the land so desolate for twenty years. Everywhere, everything was parched. The leaves on the ground crumbled when walked upon; the trees were naked and barks peeled off the trunks. Cattle moved about restlessly, and as for poultry—well, just yesterday four of his best laying hens had died because there was no water.

Bush fires had swept Las Lomas and left the village brown and burnt. Manko knew well enough that the sulphur stones in the ground were the cause of all the destruction of crops, for hadn't he seen the same thing happen all the years, if even not so disastrous? The sun would be so hot that the least friction on the stones would cause sparks, and what with dry shrubs and leaves around, it was easy for a little flame to spread for acres.

But Manko was not thinking about fires. He was thirsty, his family was thirsty, his livestock was thirsty, and there was no water. People in the village went as far as the Guayamare River with donkey carts to get the precious fluid, but who could drink the muddy stuff? Yet they had no alternative but to use it. Manko had warned them to boil the water before drinking. Even so, a child had died of typhoid a week ago, and many more were on the sick list.

Wiping perspiration from his forehead with a dirty shirt sleeve Manko tried to look on the bright side of things. Such a dry season meant the ground would be good for the corn seeds when the rains came. With a good crop, he might be able to send Sunny to school at one of the colleges in Port-of-Spain. Ever since Rannie gave birth to their only child, they had planned and planned, and being poor folk they had prayed for rich crops to sell so as to save money for the boy. Rannie had said: "Manko, we must gee de chile education. We poor, and we go get old soon, but we have a chile, and we mus' gee 'im all de things odder people have." So for twelve toiling years the two people had stood together, scraping pennies from their earnings and putting them in the old tin pan under Manko's bed.

Manko sat under a mango tree to rest for a few minutes. He had gathered tomatoes, and dug dasheens, but these were so plentiful now that he hoped to get little from his sales. It was nearing midday, and Rannie must have already sent Sunny with his roti when he returned from school.

He looked down the winding path and sure enough the boy was coming, walking upright and with his head held up to the wind.

Manko was proud of his son. He used to boast in the village

that one day Sunny would be a doctor, or a lawyer. But now, with his stock dying out, he was not so sure.

Sunny came and sat near to him. *"Mai* say no more water, *baph,* she only have little bit for tonight."

Manko ate the roti in silence, biting tomatoes sparingly and sucking the juice when his throat felt dry.

Sunny was talkative. "Dis morning only few children come to skool. Dey come wid water in ah bottle, an' I didn't have any. I had to beg and I only get lill bit from a lady living near de skool."

"Here *betah,* take tomatoes and eat," Manko said, offering his son a large, red one .

"Baph, wen we going to live in de town?"

"Boy, how much time I tell yuh don't worry me?" The strain of the past months was telling on Manko's nerves. He said, softer, "De country good to live in, yuh does get good tings to eat and grow up strong. No trouble here, no steel band and saga boy to humbug yuh. Everything quiet, an' wen rain come everything pretty wid flowers. If wen yuh get ah big man yuh want to go and wok in de city, I can't stop yuh."

"But no water here, *baph,* and dey have plenty in Port ah Spain."

"Have faith, boy. Pray to Sharma, and one day plenty rain go come." He pointed to the sky where white clouds scudded. "Wen dem clouds burst, all we worry over."

But Manko's optimism burned away with the passing of March. April flamed her way to death, and not even the blossoming poui tree in his yard gave him or his wife much courage. The carat roof of the house was crackling and turning a deeper brown. Rannie had to be careful with her fire when cooking—the tiniest escaped spark would spell disaster for them.

For a whole month now Sunny had not been to school.

Came a week in May when things looked desperate for the villagers. Typhoid was spreading. Two more had died, and the authorities were helpless without water. Sometimes a truck would come, but by the time it got to the thirsty village, very little was left in the tanks. Bush fires burned every day, and the farmers were always on guard.

One day Manko came back from the garden to meet Sunny lying ill in bed.

"I was thirsty, *baph,* and I was drinking river water. I feeling

sick now," and the boy tossed restlessly about on the hard bed.

Manko went silently to the treasured tin he kept under the bed. "De boy mus' get well," he told his wife, "I going to town to get ah doctor and medicine." Rannie nodded understandingly.

Late in the evening Manko returned with the doctor. They held their breaths as he felt Sunny's pulse and examined his eyes.

"This boy is very ill, and the best place for him is a hospital," he said. "Anyway, get these medicines I am going to prescribe, and if in a day or two he doesn't improve, come for me again, or better yet send him to the hospital."

"But doctor, we ent have so much money," Rannie said, tears coming to her eyes.

"Well, it mightn't be so bad after all. Don't forget the medicines."

In all Manko must have spent twenty dollars, but he did not mind. At all costs Sunny must get well.

As the nights passed by he or Rannie would sit up with the sick boy, in case he wanted anything.

Nature continued to crack the earth and scorch the plants. One day a slight shower fell, and keskidees flew about in the field. Manko was excited. He hurried home and told Rannie that the drought might be broken any time now, and they would have the blessed rain.

Manko was out in his garden the day the rains came. He was bending to the soil with a hoe when a great black cloud came across the sky, blotting out the fierce sun. All around, black clouds were piling up. He dropped his hoe and gazed hopefully.

A heavy rain drop fell on his hand. Across the fields, across the trees, far, far away came a roar which was music to the ears of the farmers. The rain swept in furiously, as if wanting to make up for a long absence in a few minutes.

Manko was drenched to the skin. He shouted joyfully to the other men working in their fields, and started to run home in the heavy shower.

Rannie ran across the wet field to meet her husband. Manko said: "Rannie, all we worries over now," and she saw how happy he was again, with his old shirt sticking to his back and the water running down his face. In her own simple way, she thought how strange it was that tears of sorrow should be streaming down her face, and at the same time the rain they wanted so much should be falling.

She held up her head. "Manko, yuh son dead."

Poor Great

Down through the thinning top of a coconut palm whose trunk curved over the garden's zinc paling, there was the flash of bronze skin in the sunlight. Persistently, again and again; mingling with the dark bluish gleams of a road flanked by the waters of the Lamaha Canal.

I gazed down into the foliage of almond and fustic trees screening the middle and the lower end of the garden. I watched in vain for a glimpse of squat, mat-haired 'Buck' aborigines. Then suddenly I heard the sound of shuffling feet on the plank that stretched from outside the garden gate across the Canal. The bell on the gate tinkled, the gate was pushed open. . . .

Easing down the shutters, I backed away from the window. Then I turned and fled through the hallway.

"Where are you off to, boy?" cried Clorinda, appearing in the dusk, "I thought I told you to stay on the gallery."

" 'Bucks!' " I ejaculated, " 'Bucks!' "

"Where?"

"Coming through the gate!"

Neither of us had any need to descend the long flight of steps. A glimpse from the top was sufficient.

Round the foot of the stairs the 'Bucks' had paused. They had passed under the house which was mounted on piles and they now stood with outstretched hands and upturned faces gazing in silence at us.

"Poor things!" murmured Clorinda, turning to go into the kitchen.

In the forefront of the gathering I saw an old man in a loin cloth; four or five small children—more yellow than bronze and with nothing to cover their pot bellies; an old woman and a young, full-breasted girl modestly attired in aprons of coloured beads.

Hey, where yuh goin', soul?" drawled Vangie, the Negro servant girl, as Clorinda came out of the kitchen with half a ship's biscuit in her hand.

Vangie had migrated to Georgetown from a village on the East Coast of the Demerara River and there was little about the Buck' aborigines of British Guiana that she did not know. And it had

always been Vangie's contention that unless the larder in the kitchen was well-stocked the problem of how to deal with 'Buck' Indian indigence was not quite so simple as it looked. One had to take into account the fact that, side by side with a high sense of communal cohesion, the 'Bucks' possessed a protective genius for witchcraft; and that they would not hesitate to use it against anyone who, however well-intentioned, had done anything that was likely to create friction or spread dissatisfaction among them.

"Yuh want fo' get a swell foot, soul?" she cried, intercepting Clorinda half-way down the stairs.

Eyeing the nutmeg on a string which Vangie wore around her neck to keep away the duppies, Clorinda, a Negro native of Barbados with roots deep in the Anglican soil of that island, frowned:—

"What's wrong with you, girl?"

" Yuh want fo' start wastin' away with a disease no doctor can cure?" asked Vangie gently.

"No, I don't!"

"A disease," pursued Vangie, "you'd have fo' cross the ocean three times before yuh could shake it off?"

"No, I don't!"

"Well, then, send them away, soul. Le' them go to the alms-house." She turned from Clorinda and, lifting up the tips of her skirt, gazed down at the red-skins. "Shoo!" she cried, shooting out a leg, "Go 'long 'bout all-yuh business. We ain't got nothin' today."

The upturned gazes fell. The hands dropped. A wave of leaden resignation swept over the 'Bucks'. Then they turned and moved in single file into the darkness under the house.

Squatting on her haunches, Vangie watched them penetrate deep into the sunlight. She waited until they had disappeared through the gate. Then she rose and came back up the stairs.

"If yuh ain't got enough fo' go round," she said to Clorinda with a lugubrious shake of the head, "Yuh must harden yuh heart against them, soul. Yuh must never give one be-out yuh give all, udderwise the naked vagabonds will think yuh does play favour-ites Then, after all taking all yuh got to give them, they will go out through the gate without saying a word, but when they get back up-country they will start working obeah fo' yuh sure as sea-cows does graze in the pond in the Botanical Gardens."

II

Holding on to the bannister, I began the steep descent. Gingerly. I mustn't make any noise. No one must know that I was not still on the gallery.

When I reached the bottom of the stairs I again marvelled (I never ceased to do this) at the absence of vegetation under the house. Here and there on the black loamy soil a toadstool, white-hooded and 'ghostly', had come up in the night. Something for me to flourish under the servant girl's nose when, sated with the pleasures of the garden and an eyeful of the road, I crept back up the stairs.

"Oh, my Gawd! A *jumbie* tree! Well, look pon my trial. Throw away de t'ing, boy!"

Poor Vangie! Although she had begun (upon Clorinda's insistence) to attend the Sunday evening services at Christ Church she still had, alongside of an unshakable belief in *obeah,* a horror of anything that embodied for her the spirit of the dead.

As I was about to emerge from under the house, I saw what at first I was almost tempted to believe was an apparition in the sunlight. I was six years of age but even so I had no faith in the existence of *jumbies* or *duppies.* So I looked again and saw, instead of a ghost, the motionless figure of a black man who had paused before the small wooden tray which Vangie had placed on a soap box outside the gate early that morning.

Lying upon the tray beneath a napkin was an assortment of fruits and home-made pastry. The coconut for the sugar cakes and the corn pone wrapped in banana leaves had come out of the garden, but the custard apples, the star apples and the sapodillas Vangie had bought in Georgetown Market. "Nobody ain't gwine t'ief nothin'!" Vangie had sworn when, on the previous day, Clorinda had—after much hesitation—decided to fall in with an old Carib custom which had spread to every Negro household along the road.

I hid behind one of the piles on which the house stood and watched. The Negro lifted up the edge of the napkin and, from beneath the shredded brim of his palm leaf hat, subjected Clorinda's first day's offerings to long, silent scrutiny. Eventually he selected a sapodilla and dropped a coin on the tray. The coin fell with a clink as though it had joined a small pile. Then he slowly turned and crossed the plank. As he sauntered down the road devouring the plum he spat the black shining seeds into the Canal.

III

Climbing on to the gate, I leaned over and glanced up the road. Hard by, under the scrappy shade of the coconut tree, I glimpsed the snowy plumes of a brood of ducks, fresh from a dip in the Lamaha, doing their toilet on the grassy verge. Half-way

along the road two small Negro boys stood dangling pieces of string in the amber-hued flow.

"Sweet cassava! Sweet cassava! Poppin' round the corner! Put it in the pot and it burst like powder!"

I turned my head and saw, hurrying against the vanishing cool of the morning, a troop of Negro women coming up the road . . . their arms swinging . . . their white calico skirts, gathered up from just below the hips, swaying. Burdens lay upon the padded, kerchiefed heads: a long tray heaped up with ground provisions, a skillet shining as though newly arrived from the tinsmith's (*Tambrin syrup fo' de cold and cough*!), a basket filled with bottles of a greenish bitter brew (*Maubé*! *Get yo' Maubé*!), uncorked and foaming in the sun.

Nobody from the dwelling houses set in gardens on both sides of the road wanted any of the things they were crying. As it was, there wasn't a gate that did not have outside it a little unattended tray on which something was being offered for sale. And so the Negro women with their swaying skirts continued on up the high, blue-gleaming road.

IV

As the troop swung out of sight Mr. Underwood appeared at the top of the road.

I do not know how the old Negro had come by his afflictions but they were agonizing to contemplate. His bearded face, drooping lips and mournful eyes combined to mirror humility and distress. One of Mr. Underwood's legs was artificial. The other, scaly and puffed up across the instep, was so big—I'd heard Vangie say there was 'water' on it—that even with the aid of a stick Mr. Underwood could scarcely drag it along.

Clad in a preacher's old frock-coat, Mr. Underwood was a mendicant. He begged his daily bread. As he went from gate to gate, doddering along in the sun, weaving across the road, his hat outstretched in his hand, the response which Mr. Underwood evoked was furtive but fairly general. Housewife after housewife would lean over a garden gate or zinc paling and hand him the leavings of a meal which Mr. Underwood, with a "God bless you!" or a nod of silent gratitude would seize and instantly devour as if he, the paradox of a short, stocky man suspected of harbouring a maw-worm, could never get enough to eat.

"Br'r Goat comin' down the road!"

The crayfishing in the Canal abruptly ended. One of the two Negro boys, depositing the morning's catch in a tin can, moved with caution past Mr. Underwood *up* the road; the other boy

seemed to be heading my way. When the distance between them and Mr. Underwood was appproximately equal the boy coming towards me wheeled and shouted at the top of his voice: —

"Who stole the goat?"

Cried the other boy: —

"The man with the long coat!"

Hovering in defiance, the two boys moved round and round awhile. Then: —

"What smells so high?"

Back came the answering cry: —

"You mean like a billy goat?"

Suddenly the ducks, squawking, began to scatter from beneath the coconut tree. Some splashed into the Canal, while others flew straight on to the road, waddling in confusion and panic before the breathless onrush of one of the two boys. Not far behind the boy's flying shirt-tail Mr. Underwood was taking long, quick strides as though there was plenty of spring not only in his cork leg but in the other one too.

Retreating from the gate, I held my breath. There was the sound of a flying leap across the Lamaha. Then the scurrying of feet in the barrack yard next door. What if Mr. Underwood, thwarted in one direction, should turn in another? I stood still and listened. Then, from underneath the house, I saw Mr. Underwood standing on the road directly in front of our gate.

"You little poor great vagabond!" he shouted, waving a stick at me, "You wait till I catch all-yuh. It's all-yuh that smell!"

Then he turned and, leaning heavily on the stick, limped back up the road.

GUILLEVIC

THEY SING

The fire is warm, it's natural
the wave comes back, it's natural
the bough swings down, it's natural
and men still sing, it's natural
sing their distress, it's natural
and sing their hope, it's natural

It's their distress
that isn't

Ystradgynlais

A Welsh Mining Village
(FOR JOSEF HERMAN)

I. *Miners at Sunset*

Miners, moving, among smoke sunsets, down
Steep streets
whose eyes glitter in dark places
And blank and almost blind uniform spaces
Seem untouched by time or god
to have grown,
Despite miniature stature and mien,
alone
Larger and more solid the ground they tread
Being fundamental as dark fire, white bread,
Knowing the grave's no new pit to go down
But the old seams re-opened, diamond wounds
And bleeding memories, the weeping sounds
Of women, and hard wood,
sleepers in grief,
Lamps, tools, cases
of faith and unbelief,
Who know too, time honoured, the haunt of town,
And graveyards a cool green as grim suns go down.

II. *Rescue Party*

These gay men I have not written about before
In any fantastic poem are doomed or dead
And the world in stealth of guilt comes to deplore
The tunnel and tomb of life where their courage bled
And, weeping, their silent wives set out to explore
Disasters of dream, in hearses with black and red
Blossoms, a doom that haunts like a desolate whore
The rigid contested nightmare of each deathbed.

These gay youths from Gwalia indeed were fools to be dead
For little they knew of the loves they eternally swore
And likely it is that truthful they would remain;

But each weeping Gwendoline's sensual fire's soon wed,
For their deaths' futility little humanity bore
Torn between love and reality's haunting refrain.

III. *Carnival*

Carnival time
girls from pit valleys
come
Down town, from even so far as Rhondda,
To ride on painted wagon with painted drum
And later, in ripe bunches, swing beyond the
River of lamps, among men swaying, with flagons
Singing, purses to burn and hearts to squander
Beauty
upon fiery flameless dragons,
Then, aimlessly, with wiry men, to wander
Out of the lamplight to the pitchblack park
There, upon bare ground or beneath green bushes
Shading torches, laughing like naked bells,
To watch skyrockets spearing night,
starshells
Scatter delight,
and in between the flashes
Make love
like silver water
in the dark.

IV. *Women with Child*

Over the one bridge, small river aflame
With light, two tall and timeless women tread,
Meet in the centre, talk of their men dead,
Then turn, and each goes back the way she came.
Solid they are, and as unsoiled by shame,
Being, both, great, of rabelaisian girth
Shaken by some uncontrollable mirth,
And melancholy as each dead man's name.

Still, on the bridge they stand, huge, round and dry
As ageless boulders all floods have passed by,
Midway between the two halves of man's town
Joyful in one
suffering in the other
Each bears a son whose image is unknown
And mourns the memory of the other's brother.

V. *Prayer Wheel*

Beyond the town crowned by chapel, a wheel
Turns,
monotonous as steel raindust dropping
On monotonous streets,
and never stopping,
Like some mountainous Tibetan prayerwheel
Near which, summer and winter, children grow
Among girls, flowering, and an old man gropes
In black dust for small, round, and hard black hopes,
Where, in monasteries on bare slopes,
men know
Man in oblivion, man in embryo,
Agony of that slow implacable wheel,
Like woman,
and, praying and swearing, kneel
In life-giving tombs, timeless and terrible,
Prostrate and naked, or bent, womb-wise, double,
Crushed or conceived, where time falls like black snow.

It will be beautiful

Song

My daughter, the sea,
already you've guessed it,
isn't a present
that someone can give you

My daughter, the wave
is another world
where the foot is buried
and nothing answers

The horizon, my daughter,
is a great lord
that will take you in
when you have opened it

My daughter, the bramble,
you've noted already
offers no friendship
that won't be a squabble

My daughter, the dance,
how may I teach you?
it's there in your eyes
and you will follow it

and hope, my daughter,
more strong than the sea
more strong than the bramble
the wave and the dance.

To the Sleeping Beauty

There is no need
to sleep for ever

I will love you

You will find nothing fearful
in any season

and you will shudder only
with your body against mine

Light

It isn't true
that every love goes down

it isn't true
love gives us up to grief

it isn t true
love brings us to regret

when arm in arm we see
the road towards the future

it isn't true
that every love gets lost

when there the forces rising
call upon our forces

it isn't true
that every love goes rotten

when arm to arm we set
our strength to the attack

it isn't true
that every love falls broken

when the supreme battle
is marching into victory

it isn't true at all
the things they say of love

when the same anger takes
two lovers deep in love

when of their days they make
twined with the days of all
a love and its delight

The First Day

It will be beautiful
the tree which light will find out on the morning
of that first day

when the extinguisher has fallen
when masters are thrown out
when people see themselves in light alone
now with themselves

it will be beautiful
the moment come for light
to take the tree upon the morning
of the first day

when people gain the streets
when people meet their joys
and see the trees uprising in the light.

Inconsequential Sequence

Encounter 1

When I see my colleagues' faces
Inturned on their unwritten verses,
Abstraction-blurred, their troubled eyes
Seem half-hidden by a veil:—

My poacher, I remember, who
Stood one a drink, I was alone
Propping the bar when he said, "Jack
I know you write by your look",
Much as he'd judge a ferret's cast
Or the white fox he mistook for a ghost.

My friend, poacher, with eyes outstarting,
As much an oddity as an artist,
Your life is shaped by other needs
Than over-simple quest for food—
As if you set a pheasant-snare
With your own instead of horsehair.

The other encounter

You are a stranger, one whose face
Seen casually in a public place
Puzzles me. Where did I before
See that brow and hear that talk—
Accents so free no doubt assails them—
And in your gestures see your children?

Not young, nor old, but much as I am
In pride of life—or else its doldrum.
(About the pride *you'd* have no doubt:
Doldrums would be your partner's fault!)
Bold flower, we humbly breathe your pollen
And in your gestures see your children.

By them in time you'll be replaced
(And me they'll superannuate).
Yet now I see your wisdom is
To stop them catching up with us,
And dazzling their weak rebellion
Your lovely gestures keep them children.

Weather

One fine day (but now we rest)
Broke the windows of the house
Burst the brain with lawless thoughts.
Now we're restful in the green
Mistiness of promised rain.

Now mere smoking asphalt is
Our Trinidad, our island spice,
And labourers open sandwiches
Beneath new-candled chestnut trees.
We've not wanted shade so long
Now we have it there's no sun.

One fine day (now in the past)
Was the promise of the year,
What we lived a lifetime for—
To gaze upon perfection's face
And see the Spring in nakedness.

One fine day (but now we rest)
Mostly nerves were too high strung.
Rest now. Was one day too long—
But for which there's no rest in
Mistiness of promised rain?

Fashion note

The single blossom when it falls
Shows red on whiteness like a girl's
Nipples (our little sister
Has no breasts).

The double cherry with its frills
Like demoiselles with parasols
Follows, but modish furbelows
Promise no fruit.

The single blossom when it drops
Exchanges Spring for summer frocks
Frivolity for sunburnt body.
There'll be a cherry.

National Gallery (special exhibition)

Gala concert, Filarmonic, Venice (1782)
Painted at his easy best by clever Guardi (Francesco)
Sets the human problem squarely. Here the people are sat down
Under the high-vaulted marble, and the wine is passing round,
Violins perched on a ledge—the high Musicians' Gallery—
Behind them stand the female singers, in a row, respectfully.
Candelabras are a glaze upon the silk and velvet gloom,

Individuals merged in audience, waiting the composer's theme.
O the centuries piled up to this Venetian finery,
Guardi's high-lights and his glazes may provide us with a key
To other music. We owe a debt of gratitude
To Guardi for his architectural painting (1782).

Next door are the earlier panels: Christ is mocked, a virgin born;
Mars strips Venus: and Giotto's gilded skies are Byzantine.
Here the individual feels his questing ego gone
In among the splendid visions, finds his ego not alone—
We create our gods and angels, we create *ourselves,* and then
Out of ribs create a lover, out of sympathies a friend.

Guardi's concert, Filarmonic, Venice (1782)
Takes a reading in his sextant of a different latitude.
All the finery, the ribbons, even chairs are *comme il faut,*
Certainly *du monde* is present but no solitary soul,
Not a pair of lovers, nor a torturer, nor Mars;
Nor Giotto to encircle warmth with his Byzantine skies.
Here is neither history, nor suffering. It is all
Horsehair scraping over catgut and vibrating vocal chords,
Candelabra, and the velvet touched to high-lights with a glaze
Clever Guardi learned the trick of in his architectural days.
Can you smell the smell of order which has neither ears nor nose?
Only odour of the odour of these bodies without pores?
Music cannot reach them, therefore, nor can sweat, nor can the ardour
That might tempt to good or evil, or the apple in the garden.
We've no people here but classes ranged according to a plan—
Guardi knew it, Guardi saw it, Guardi, Guardi, he's your man!
Points of light and points of darkness: darkness darkness that endures
From 1782 to 19 . . . my guess is as good as yours.

National Gallery (permanent collection)

Your touch has still its ancient power,
Painter, and your full brush has made
Mythology of old desire
So new and vivid I'm amazed

Violence and crime and lingering death
And love forced on unwilling limbs—
Sunshiny agony of the flesh—
Your touch sets to familiar hymns.

Your god is carried to the tomb,
The bearers straining at the slings
Under the loins. Canvas shows through
Where the work is unfulfilled.

Mythology breaks down, a space
Lets in the undecided hope.
Your touch has still its power perhaps
Also in knowing where to stop.

Postscript

Character equals situation
I used to think and think so yet.
But, being older, my revision
Places more emphasis on death
As the near-limit.

The situation first is man,
Upright, so prone to hernia,
Who in the transports of his joy
Emits premonitory fear.
That is his summit.

The situations we can count
(The learned mention thirty-six)
Are worth only a small amount:—
Forged guarantee and syphilis.
The facts are richer.

Say to a playwright, 'Find a plot!'
He picks his fancy from the index:
But Romeo and Juliet
At a building-estate window
Feel, feel it's different.

They feel, and what they feel's the point,
And wishing's whole fulfillment
That works statistically out
In interest and debt-payment,
Comes to roost—home.

'Colour comes home into the eyes'
And dreams invent mythology,
A fabulous code made up to hide
The plain man's plain, prosaic lie,
His unforgivable shame.

GUILLEVIC

HER BED

Her bed is like a nest, it's always warm.
She never says that time is pressing.
Eating fruit, drinking wine.
Asking nothing of time.
Waiting for night, however, side by side.
She never speaks of staying.
She never remakes the bed.

(*All the Guillevic poems translated by J.L.*)

Chronicle & Polemic

JACK LINDSAY

The British Scene:

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR CULTURE

(i) If we pause for a moment and look back to the war-years and the first year or so after the war, we cannot but feel a sad difference in the cultural temperature. Not only have many possibilities, clear in 1945, been left undeveloped; in much of the upper levels of culture there is a vulgar and gloomy disintegration of purpose and significance that it would be hard to parallel in our history. Even the pert "chaos" of the post-1918 years seems full of human stirrings in comparison, despite its many delusions and revulsions. Surely not even the most obstinate of pure-artists could fail to see the correlation between this cultural impasse and the political situation.

That is one aspect. On the other hand there are great potentialities present and palpable. Never has the possibility of a truly national culture based in the people been so strong. This aspect appears in the temporarily baffled but undefeated elements which came together during the war and which still permeate the situation; and in multiple activities and expressions which the political check prevents from maturing and merging, but which hold on and develop despite the regressive pressures from above.

These two contradictory aspects of the situation make up the complete picture. The contradiction provides the basis of conflict in our culture, the chance of a tremendous advance. And in all I have to say here about the backward elements, the interpenetrating presence of the positive energies must be understood. The latter indeed are what alone give focus and meaning to the picture I want to draw of the darkening side of things. Without them the darkening side would be justified in its despair; and so any criticism of that side, if it is to be effective and truthful, must be the voice of the stirring energies. Otherwise the criticism blends with the elegiac and deathly forces, and merely affirms their message of decay.

What I am concerned with here is to detach the regressive side, which may be described as the dominant one in the sense that it gains the support, directly or indirectly, of the reactionary forces that control our society in the political and economic spheres.

(ii) Take one example of regression. *Horizon* during the war-years published Aragon's Resistance-poetry, and Cyril Connolly wrote:

> Aragon (always a lover and a thinker), as a Surrealist, developed his imagination; as a Communist, his sense of political reality; as a soldier, his humanity and patriotism . . . There is no mystery about the process which led to these poems. Now let our poets give us, from their own design, a music as lucid, as moving, and as largely conceived.

By 1949 *Horizon* had moved to a very different position:

> Suppose these people are right and that the only salvation for the artist lies in the representation of the problem of the working class. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray." Then where are the productions of those

who have not gone astray, and which we should take as a model? So far as we know they don't exist, or if they do, our deviation has so intoxicated us that we don't even like them. We are driven to the ultimate conclusion that "decadence" is the only living force in the arts today, and, that if the whole world were to go Communist tomorrow, despite all the commissars in the universe, it would cry out for "decadent" modern art.

A model, it seems, can be found in a spewer of post-Laurentian verbiage like Henry Miller or in a slick mountebank of perverted marionettes like Sartre, but not in Aragon of the largely conceived and lucid musics and the heroic underground-struggle—not in Eluard or Tzara, Neruda or Tuwim, Drda or Tikhonov, Leonov or Azhayev: to take a few names from the most obvious hat. What can we say to the smug and tasteless provincialism that finds a model in Auden and not in Neruda, in Miller and not in Nazim Hikmet? Here is philistinism bragging in its best aesthetical falsetto: the eunuch incontestably dismissing the vitality of the normal man as gross.

That the attempt should be made to decry the writers bearing the creative standards of our epoch, is correct enough work for the lost and failing sections of the intelligentsia; and we cannot complain that where reactionary politics control the society, the deciers are described as the defenders of civilised values. What we can, however, complain about is the comparative lack of struggle in the "dominant" intellectual levels in Britain, the extent to which the Cocktail Party in the Wasteland is considered the sole literary event. If we see only these levels, then the complacence, the passivity, the acquiescence of large numbers of the British intelligentsia is what gives the final horror to the dull scene. For this complacence persists precisely in the ratio to which the real tumult of fear and hope, of paralytic confusion and clarifying struggle, among our people, is missed out, ignored, or misunderstood.

Again, a child could scarcely fail to link this waste-of-shame with the political situation, where the Rightwing Labour-leaders call themselves socialist exponents of British humanism while acting as the seedy salesmen of American imperialism. Their modest reforms we must abstract from the Fabian eternity of their conception and set within the actual afterwar world with its atomic threat over all. *Time* is the essence of the matter. Efforts to raise or maintain living-standards in the countries which have been built up on imperialist exploitations must make the choice of an intensified imperialism or of a sharp turn into socialist construction with power *actively* taken over by the people. There is no possible middleway, no margin left for liberal concessions all round; and England with her heavily worsened world-position, her vast loss of investments in foreign lands, has the specific choice of socialism or of dirtywork partnership with the terrifically-strengthened U.S.A. imperialism. That is why the "reforms" in fact work out in their total effect as confirming the monopoly-controls in Britain, as State-capitalism, and why the great burst of hope that put the Labour Party in power in 1945 has been dissipated, driven under, forced into new forms of struggle as the complex drama of betrayal and realisation is played bitterly out.

All this is political A.B.C., but it has to be said to set the basic lines of the scene.

Think again of the cultural situation in the war and for a short while after—the rise in serious reading and book-sales, the wide response to the theatre and the growth of a mass-audience for ballet, the stimulation of the visual arts, the birth of a national film-industry capable of expressing our people, the new extensions of adult education, the mass-audience for good music. The new forms devised for bringing the people actively into the area of art-expression; the multiple schemes dealing with both professional and amateur activities that were converging on stable national and local bases and co-ordinations . . .

Not all the gains have been lost; but the general setback is sadly undeniable. The primary basis of a national culture, then being laid, has been largely broken down. The forces which the large-scale movement forward released have to undergo an entangled and difficult process of re-formation as the political struggle clarifies afresh and shows how strongly entrenched are the reactionary forces which must be dislodged if the people's demand for a fuller life is to be realised. If we were getting even the first mild stage of socialism, such a situation would be unthinkable; for socialism means a liberation of the forces of the people, and once that starts the tide of hope and happiness sets irresistibly in.

(iii) What should be of special interest to the intellectual is the way in which the mood of despair and acquiescence in evil is built up. Insofar as he himself acquiesces and helps to facilitate the decay, he betrays all that is significant in humanism, its emphasis on universality and on man's power to overcome the problems that his advance sets up.

He betrays his status as an intellectual; he abdicates from its primary responsibility. Instead of struggling to understand the historical process, to enter actively into it and to clarify its trends, to resume in his work the total conflict and to project its resolutions, he makes himself a blind and wilful instrument of regression. In the name of personality and freedom, he depersonalises and shackles himself. He abandons his concern for the forms and meanings that aid the emergence of man on a higher level, that play a necessary part of guidance in the movement. Instead, he attempts to perpetuate the conflict as a mad dilemma; he substitutes the endless recurrence of the birthpang for the successful rhythm of birth.

His incapacity to enter into the struggle which alone restores integrity and makes possible a valuable development, he identifies with the preservation of values in the abstract—though in fact it too often means only the preservation of bank-balance and prestige. Thus the needs of a desperate and corrupt ruling-class impress themselves on the scared intellectual without recourse to overt bribery and coercion.

Such an intellectual, all the same, is as coerced as man in the grip of a blackmailing gang, as corrupt as any tame police-spy calling weekly for his petty wages. Not indeed that some well-known names lack their profitable link with the Foreign Office; but that is of course a discreet matter among gentlemen. A considerable number, however, of our respected writers come shabbily to some extent under the general category I have sketched; and a few show the logical consequence of horror by blabbing now and then their complete resistance to the advance of the peoples, their preference for a lurid apocalypse of atomic and hydrogen bombs rather than the world-victory of socialism. It is worth considering the process whereby the anarchistically-minded Bertrand Russell, the supreme individualist blandly and comfortably lost in a relativist and atomised universe, comes in the end to express telepathically the ideas of the U.S. General Staff.

Such intellectuals prefer to see the world destroyed rather than face their own inner disintegration, to which they have given a religious or idealist label. Their pessimism is, underneath, for themselves; and in that they are justified. The world-end that stinks under their nostrils is their own end. They project on to the world their own pervasive sense of frustration and belittlement. They declare first that all things fade in a night of trivialisation, the world of the hollow men ending not with a bang but a whimper. Then, as the political struggle deepens and their acquiescence draws them into its vortex, they turn their conviction of failure into the vicious demand that the whimper become the bang after all.

Suicide is always a revenge-act of the excluded, the failure, the person who cannot resolve his inner conflict. The suicide in fantasy kills the world

and survives in his own justification; his death is the moment when he deprives the world in turn and makes it discover (he is sure) what it has lost, martyred, excluded. The art of existentialism and the allied pessimisms is the art of the suicide—though the act of revenge is prolonged through work after "murderous" work in the delayed hope of a coincidence between a general world-end and the fantasy of hate. In the last resort the general disaster is desired as the vindication of the "superior" insight and power of the artist who could not overcome his inner conflict in the resolving liberation of an art that truly fought for harmony and realised union. An art that had found the rhythm which gives birth to the future.

(iv) Take two outstanding examples, *Apes and Essence* by Aldous Huxley, and *1984* by Orwell. In Huxley the idea of the mild melancholy man, the voluptuary misfit that provided the critical centre of his early work, has given way to a schizophrenic opposition of saint and sensualist as the division widens in his soul; and the latent fear and hatred come out in expanded fantasies of the horrors and perversions lying ahead of mankind. These fantasies derive on the one hand in fact from Huxley's self-divided state and on the other hand from his identification of the historical process with his own morbid entanglement—just as Dali completed the regressive elements in surrealism by identifying the structure of art with paranoia.

This projection of an internal regression on to history is however made possible by the typical philistine or petty-bourgeois inability to distinguish between the class-state in its final tyrannous forms of regimentation and the proletarian dictatorship which smashes the class-state and brings about a totally different sort of unity. Because the failing intellectual has abstractly projected his sense of horror at the repressive controls of the imperialist state that issue in Fascism, he has falsely opposed himself to society and cannot distinguish the fascist form from the form alone capable of restoring freedom in such a world. Each form is abstracted as Power.

The opposition of the individual here is false because no resolution is possible, no emergence from the suffering and horror. The individual in fact has attached himself passively to the mechanism of the class-state however he may attack Power in the abstract, because his morbid fantasy makes it impossible for him to move into an understanding of what is actually at stake. He either fears and loathes his sensuality as Huxley does, and diverts its tormented imagery into pictures of a world gone biologically mad in perverse lusts; or he identifies his creativeness with the mad forces of the world as Dali does.

In the first case he finds ultimate union with the class-state because he is repressing his needs and urges as the State has to repress the needs and urges of the people—i.e. he identifies his turbulent "unconscious" with the masses and wants the dangerous force held down lest it burst out in the mad ways his fantasy outlines. In the second case the identification of the artform and the imperialist state is direct: since the State is moving daily nearer to the paranoiac explosion of war it daily approximates more to the pure "artform" of such an artist.

In the case of Orwell the matter is simpler. Here we find a plain movement of the petty-bourgeois via various frustrations into the full position of identifying the fascist state with the mass-movements which alone can prevent the emergence of such a state. Just as Koestler used the fears generated by his personal experience under Francoist fascism and the anti-communist French government of 1939-40 to paint pictures of the horrors of communist society, so Orwell uses his sense of the brutalisation of the class-state to blackguard the new forms of freedom emerging under socialism.

The root of all such positions lies in the inability to understand the nature of the class-state and in a phoney-opposition of the individual to society. The

abstracted individualist turns out to be the perfect embodiment of the class-state that he may think he dislikes or rejects; he has in fact a complete solidarity with all the regressive forces of his day, and the only thing he opposes is the movement of the peoples to freedom and happiness. Our "wintry conscience", V. S. Pritchett has said of Orwell; rather it should be "a blight, smut or canker distorting all spring-buds of understanding".

He is the ideologist of the final stage of Fascism, the super-fascism which looks to the destruction of humanity. Just as the imperialist is ready to destroy the world rather than give up his power, so the Huxleys and Orwells project revenge-fantasies to compensate for the intolerable tension of their failure in creativeness.

(v) But we distort the picture and put an undue emphasis on the "tormented" element in such writers unless we see that the "torment" has a very smug and self-consoling element at its core. It is essentially an exploitation of the fears and confusions of others to further the self-preservation and fortify the egoism of the writer in question.

That is, in the last resort the Orwells and Huxleys are simply fighting to preserve the class that they once "rejected" in a rootless anarchistic way. The moment they had to face up to the real conflict of their world and decide their relationship to the working-class alone capable of destroying the madness and discords, they edged round to a flank-action in support of the world which they had denounced as lacerating their finer sensibilities. Koestler discovers with a sigh of relief that Blimps are better chaps than Commissars—that it is not the Blimps who really threaten his way of life, his need of drawing stimulus from a self-divided world where he can feel safe, do pretty well, and evade the issues of health and happiness.

The effects of this trend are easy to state. What is less easy is to define the stages of corruption, the complex process of self-deception whereby an original impulse to truth and love has become a twisted instrument of hate and falsehood—till at last the intellectual feels he is making a lonely stand for humanist or religious values by denying everything vital and concrete in those values: with the mad shadow of the imperialist looming up behind to make a mock of his delusion or pose of loneliness, isolation, "integrity".

(iv) And this problem is linked with the further one: How is it that ordinary people can be held and controlled against their own interests by reactionary propaganda? It is not enough to say that people are deceived. We must understand concretely what is going on in their thoughts and feelings if we are to lay hold effectively on the regressive process that seeks to mould them, and are to help them to break through. Otherwise our cries that they are deceived are not likely to reach their conditioned ears. Cannot reach enough of them or quickly enough to affect the situation in the short time left for the decision of life or death.

First, let us look further at the psychological mechanism of the process by which the intellectual turns into the defender of corruption in name of spirituality. Having lost his responsibility as an artist, he has lost his essential creativity; he then blames society for his own failure. In compensation he identifies himself with the destructive forces of his world, which seem on his side—i.e. which seem to threaten the world he resents. Thus in fact he links himself with the very forces that have maimed him. Anything is better than facing the pangs of consciousness needed for the true grasping of his position. The pangs involved in finding the new forms, the new relationships that alone can restore creativity and wholeness.

His elevation of despair and division, irony and paradox, as the key-principles of life, is thus in fact an effort to evade suffering; not the martyrdom it claims. Instead of truly suffering, of finding his union with the suffering

forces of life and thus overcoming suffering, he assumes the stigmata in a pretence of profundity, of intense sensibility. He substitutes for true suffering a concept of outrage, which in fact he enjoys as the proof of his superiority, his pure penetration. He commits a perpetual outrage on himself, which he identifies with the creative energy itself, the life-principle. The outrage thus becomes for him the sole test of virtue in art, the sole thing rousing his sensibility and giving him the conviction of being significantly alive. He feels alone, yet submitted to the outrage which is now for him the universal sign of life and communion—the *angst* or agony which he holds to lie at the root of being.

In his inner division he may picture himself as opposed to the forces of outrage, to Authority, Power, or whatever abstract terms he uses to define the principle of "inexplicable" outrage which is based simply in fact in the class-state and in capitalist modes of exploitation. But this opposition is a false one; for he does not seek to grasp the conflict along lines leading to resolution. Rather, he mystically or ironically seeks a "higher unity" in which the antinomies are overcome and the outrage is revealed as an aspect of "divine love" or as the exposure of life's fundamental "irrationality". Thus the opposition is dissolved in a false reconciliation, a dialectic of the spirit alone, which ignores the structure, movement and meaning of history—which ignores in fact the whole process whereby man becomes human.

Since the outrage has become the sole compulsion, the sole force that moves the intellectual who has fallen to this existentialist level, he identifies it with his freedom. Since he cannot conceive creativeness without it, he takes the step whereby the compulsion of outrage (the class-state) becomes necessary for his "freedom", for the terms on which he can alone hold what he considers his creativeness. He thus needs, and in the last resort defends the class-state, even to the limit of outrage which is Fascism—whatever devious concepts of reconciliation (Third Force etc.) he uses to gloss over his failure, his refusal to recognise the decisive moment of choice. He defends the class-state as the source of *angst*.

Here lies the "deviation" that has "so intoxicated" him that he doesn't even like the creators with health and joy and deep comprehension in their works, which strike out into the human future. And here lies the basic principle in all thinkers from Sade or Kierkegaard to Eliot or Sartre, who see the key to the human condition in *angst*, in outrage, in paradoxical or theological antinomies. Whatever awareness of the reality of conflict starts them off is inverted into the phoney-dialectics that sets out to defend as eternal the alienation of man from himself and from his fellows.[1]

(vii) All this may seem rarified and far from common experience. Certainly it is far from the terms in which the common man formulates his ideas and emotions. But a close relation remains between the philosophies of *angst* and the sense of frustration closing in today on the common man in Britain and the U.S.A.—anywhere that capitalist modes of life are still dominant. Only active struggle against capitalism can release from this network of fear and frustration.

Indeed the fact that the seemingly-lonely *angst* of the existentialists now becomes a general mood and is openly allied with the propaganda of Wall

[1] Still, we must distinguish sharply between the earlier exponents, in whom there is a genuine recoil of horror and pain from a society based on alienation, and the later ones who merely use the idiom of *angst* because it gives them the logic for defining division and alienation as eternal, natural—the very condition of being human. In the second phase *angst* is really an expression of complacence, of being *at home* in the world of spiritual alienation.

Street, Shell Oil, Hollywood and the Atlantic Pact is yet one more demonstration of the nearness of capitalism to the end of its tether.

True, the common man does not rationalise or philosophise away the falseface of the conflicts in which he finds himself and which permeate his life. Still he is affected by the same distortions as those the existentialists set forth —through the ceaseless conditioning of his attitudes by newsprint, radio, film, pulpit, books, etc. And through the incessant action of the capitalist forces in almost every relationship and act into which he enters. All round him he is attacked by influences proclaiming that he is inescapably tied up with the fate of imperialism. A myriad catalytic forces act to dissolve any true crystallisation of the truth of the situation in his mind—to stop him from grasping the obvious fact that his interests are utterly opposed to those of imperialism, which can seek their way-out only through his slavery and destruction. He is perpetually alienated from himself, from the truth, from union with the forces that alone can save him. He is tied up with a deadly thing that haunts his life with fear.

He has grown up in a family conditioned by all the alienating pressures of capitalism. He finds his place in society—in work, marriage, fatherhood, leisure, etc.—by a complicated series of adaptations and acceptances which bind him ever closer to the system. At the same time the inner instability of the system, and the multiple ways in which this instability reacts on his life, creates a basis of fear. He is anxious to keep his adaptations adequate for self preservation, and yet is driven towards dissatisfaction and disquiet of a potentially revolutionary nature. All this in no straight line, but in zigzags and spirals of ease and malaise, success and failure. The instability of the system progressively cuts away points of rest, and in our own day has become so great that the shocks impact everywhere.

Insofar as the inhabitant of a capitalist society is a member of organisations such as Trade Unions which must one way or another oppose and fight the system, he is gaining the power, however partially, of detaching himself from the system and of realising the possibility of forms that resolve the worsening conflict.

All the influences of the system, all its conscious and unconscious propaganda, are directed at stopping the emergence of this moment of detachment, which provides the rallying-point for the activities alone capable of resolving the system's demented contradictions. The propaganda seeks to emphasise everything that binds the individual to the system; and identifies its mad forces (moving like an express-train driven by an ape) with Civilisation, Freedom, the Good Life, etc.

Thus, insofar as he does not join one way or another in the fight for socialism, the common man is in the grip of the same distortions, the same transference of positive values to the forces that deny them, as are the existentialists.

(viii) But the link goes deeper. The process that I have discussed under the term *angst* is to be found equally in the forces that play on the common man and seek to cheat him into identifying the alienations of the class-state with the human condition. And insofar as he is duped, he accepts the play of evil as an inevitable (necessary) aspect of life—i.e. he is conditioned to accept the outraging forces as necessary components of a full and free life.

Here we touch the diabolic core—I use the word *diabolic* advisedly, for the process in question is the final deliquescent effort to carry on the tradition which in a more crudely divided and exploited society begot the problem of the Devil indissolubly attached to God, the evil which was "somehow" needed for movement, for the genesis of life itself, for consciousness and for the definition of values.

It is not enough for the propaganda forces to declare that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. The conviction of a threatening force is always there, ready at any moment of increased instability, to break through the evasions and pretences. An obscure but recurring fear must live inside every member of a doomed society—doomed, that is, unless it can grasp the nature of the environing lie and achieve in thought and action the new bases of union in which salvation lies.

These fears cannot be exorcised indefinitely by Hollywood glamours and jazz-frenzies, by Westerns and Women's Magazines, etc. In the end the drugs only accumulate anxiety. So methods of preventing the pang from reaching consciousness of its true source must be devised by the propagandists of imperialism, by whom I mean equally Dali or Bevin, the most corrupt and imbecile of Hollywood magnates or the most refined and "disinterested" of the poets accepting alienation such as Eliot.

Here we reach the way in which the regressive forces finally lay hold of people. They use the deep anxiety they have themselves created. They use it for their own purposes by diverting it from themselves, against their opponents who are in fact the allies alone capable of saving the people from the anxiety and its sources in social exploitations.

It is not simply that they tell lies about the Soviet Union or about the forces within Britain which truly fight for a fuller and stably harmonious life. It is rather that they concentrate behind the lie all the sense of repressive and distorting powers at work in capitalist society. The feeling of something wrong and dehumanising in that society they pervert into a fear of the societies where these sources of fear and hate have been overcome. Above all, the sense of an omnipresent evil playing on the lives of men and women in capitalist society is canalised and extrapolated in a fantasy-fear of the Soviet Union.

What the people of the U.S.A. fear is not the Soviet Union, which in fact never has threatened them and never can threaten them, and about which they know nothing. What they really fear are the corruptive and alienating forces at work in their own society, which have at their disposal such ghastly weapons of destruction.

(ix) It is not my business here to go into the ways and means used politically to divert the people of Britain from peaceful construction into the backing of U.S. imperialism and its war-plans. I am concerned with the cultural conditioning that underlies the degree of success in the reactionary attempt. It is to be found everywhere, from music-hall gags to boys' adventure-stories, from women's weeklies to news-reels; it gathers ever more thickly in novel, radio-talk, feature-film. A detailed analysis of B.B.C. features and talks over the years 1945-1950 would provide all the material necessary for an exposition of the ways in which the freedoms of liberal capitalism are stage by stage inverted into their opposites and the humanist resistances to war and imperialism are sapped and crumbled away. The test of intellectual integrity today lies in whether one has realised this trend and detached oneself from it, or whether one has passively, unconsciously, been carried along by its flood.

In literature the effort to confuse the issues takes varied forms e.g. a biography of Rommel, a sympathetic novel about an officer working for the Nazis (like Elizabeth Bowen's), a pseudo-psychologising of the fascist traitors (as by Rebecca West), an exploitation of the themes of the lost individual (deserter, gangster) and of the spy—themes brought together in at least one novel. The aim is to accentuate the sense of loss, confusion, fear, alien intrusion, while diverting it from awareness of the true sources of division and fear. But whether we meet a mere cashing-in on the brutalising trends or a "serious" attempt to set out a hopeless flaw in life, as in Sartre or Eliot, the general trend is along a single line of decay and distortion.

Here indeed is the point where *Angst* and Hollywood meet and shake hands. The basest pulp-thriller or crime-film is here linked with the most religiously-phrased of the apologies for alienation. Every effort is made to condition people to the belief that they are isolated in their family-world, and that the alternative is a "conflict with society" based in vice and violence. The stirring elements of revolt are distorted into the fantasy-release of the film and novel of the gangster, the murderer, etc., and the false "conflict with authority" begets the recoil into acceptance of "normal life" identified with successful adaptation to the system. Thus a vicious circle of anxieties, shames, fears, guilts is set up, and all that should be released into the true adventure of finding the new forms of progress is diverted, driven under, enslaved to regression. Revolt is turned to shame, pollution, sin, failure, division. That is, the revolt against the system is identified with the alienating forces of the sytem itself.

There are two basic images exploited to bring about this transposition of values. The Hunted Man and the Hunter. Generally the Hunter stands for the retributive forces that overtake the misfit, the criminal, the rebel—e.g. the detective in crime-tales. The reader both participates in crime and identifies himself with the forces of law and order. But a more complex and subtle series of self-identifications are involved in the reaction to the Hunted Man, where the sympathies of the reader are generally drawn towards the misfit, who becomes a Scapegoat for all the repressive and exploiting forces in society. The essential thing is that the act or attitude which cuts the Hunted from society must not be based in any true revolutionary understand ing. No, it must be based in some limited self-frustrating element. Thus the emotion of revolt in reader or spectator is neutralised, drawn into the waste-of-shame, and finally made subservient to the system and its values, in which it is felt alone lies escape from isolation, fear, self-defeat. The scapegoat-figure thus resumes his old sacramental nature; he takes the sins of the world on himself and releases the participant of his rite into a new-start—but a new-start that is in fact now the incarnation of the scapegoat's frustration and loss in the everyday life of the system.

The final turn comes, with the maturing of the political struggle, when (as in Grahame Greene's film, *The Third Man*) the fear-pressures, the harrying evil, is openly identified with the socialist world.

But one thing is gained by this convergence of all the decadent aspects of our culture upon a single point of despair, upon an open attack on socialism. The struggle is coming out into the open; and though the efforts to confuse the issues grow more violent, the possibilities of awakening people to the true nature of the conditioning pressures also grow stronger. The conflict has now reached the level where it is impossible for the imperialist forces to admit any hope, any humanist resolutions, any happiness in expression. Those who oppose the war-plans have thus the chance, the right, to claim even the simplest expression of the positive side of life as theirs and theirs alone.

(x) And so, across the decadent aspects, we come to the powerful forces for good, for a new awareness and achievement of unity and of happiness, that are struggling in the midst of the horrors. The realisation of the distorting pressures at work cannot occur as an abstract moral or artistic judgment; it can occur only as a complex act of self-renewal in which the new sense of relationships is linked with a new sense of implication, of active union with the forces alone capable of breaking the existentialist and imperialist deadlock. A new relation to the working-class and to the national tradition.

The fact that in Britain considerable sections of the working-class are still in one degree or another affected by imperialist propaganda is no argument

against this statement—though it may make more urgent the need to bring our people towards a consciousness of what truly lies at stake. The intellectual who has regained faith in universality and in man's power to break through all barriers can play an important part in such a work; and by playing his part he will learn more fully what man's power to triumph against death and the devil really means.

I may seem to be saying nothing new in this; to be repeating only what was piously said often in the 1930's. Well, when the same sort of thing was said then, it was true too, even if the modalities of the advocated process were often understood in too oversimplified a way. But it is true in a new way today, new in its urgency and its ramifications. The last shreds of "innocence" have been torn from the intellectual in the post-war world by atom-bomb imperialism. Love, the simplest lyric of love, is now a fiercely political issue, and must confront the darkening sky of life in the "Western Democracies". The War of the monopolists can be fought only in a gloom, where the spirit of man has been dusked before his body is blown to smithereens or eaten by a virus-storm. Where the faces of men have forgotten how to recognise their fellows; where the light of the struggle for peace has been broken.

This is not a mechanist matter of "the representation of the problem of the working-class". It is the recognition of the working-class as alone capable of solving the problem of *man;* it is the liberating comprehension of the true pattern of human evolutionary process. It is the struggle for peace, and it is gay, even in the hell of alienation that is the sole distinguishing factor which "Western Culture" can claim. It is consciousness of the real conflict of our world, and therefore of its resolution.

RANDALL SWINGLER

The Freedom of the West

It is humiliating to watch history repeating itself, particularly as one gets older; and saddening particularly to see the very people with whom one grew up sliding into the same evasions and hypocrisies for which in their youth they despised their elders. Haven't we heard all this before?

"By their works ye shall know them". A culture and a civilisation is judged by its manifestations in relation to other cultures, other civilisations. What does Western democracy and Western freedom mean in practice? Annihilation —bombing of Korean villages? Flame-throwers against movements of colonial liberation? Mass-extinction camps like the island of Makronisos? Military protection for discredited Oriental gangsters?

Or how shall it be judged internally? By its own forms of cultural expression, by its self-consciousness as projected in its literature, its films, its popular song and dance. The character of brutality, perversion, moral degradation, despair, at present infusing the whole culture of the West has been too often illustrated and exposed to need further comment here; how embarrassing to the legal upholders of Western civilisation must have been the revelation the other day that a mass of literature indicted as obscene was being imported into this country as Marshall Aid! Small wonder if the Poet Laureate, in

the introduction to his newly published anthology of favourite poems, bewails the extinction of the spirit of poetry, "the overflowing joy of the mind", in Europe: or Mr. George Barker, in an almost hysterical despair, writes of the compulsion on the poet to become a social pariah in the "free" Western world.

Yet the Poet Laureate's outlook is too narrow. Not every poet in Western Europe is wearily scraping up the murky dregs of his personal misery to make a stale Cocktail. In France the "overflowing joy of the mind" shows no sign of abating in the poetry of men like Paul Eluard and Aragon. Not exile and a death sentence hanging over his head have stanched the noble and ebullient voice of the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, whom many think the greatest poet now living. Not thirteen years of vicious imprisonment and desperate illness could quench the lovely and generous songs of Nazim Hikmet, the outstanding literary figure of the Middle Eastern world. Has there ever been a singer so universally loved and acclaimed as Paul Robeson, or a man who in himself so fully symbolised the spirit of striving and aspiring man?

Nor has the whole production even of Hollywood celebrated in celluloid the freedom of the stool-pigeon, the sex maniac, the sadist, and the moronic St. Vitus. A few honest and passionately serious films, like *Crossfire* and *Give Us This Day*, which have both earned many international awards, have emerged from the welter since the war, to save that fantastic dope-factory from utter disgrace. And how have the protagonists of the Western Way of Life honoured these men? In the truest manner they could, being what they are. By prison and intimidation. Edward Dmytryk, the director of the two films mentioned above, with eleven other of the leading American film-makers including the doyen of script-writers, John Howard Lawson, and Ring Lardner, is now in goal, where they join Howard Fast, the leading American novelist. Their crime is the preservation of their artistic integrity. Paul Robeson, who is already prevented from hiring any hall or getting any professional engagement in the United States, is now being prohibited from leaving his country to sing to the rest of the world.

This is the manifest reality of the Freedom of the West, a reality whose putrescent basis has just been uncovered by a book *Scottsboro Boy*, which ought incidentally to revive some guilty memories and drugged consciences. Hayward Patterson writes as a coda to his ghastly story: "What happened in the Scottsboro Case wasn't unusual. What was unusual was that the world heard about it". And those who saw to it then that the world should hear, are now among the reviled and persecuted- or remain sycophantically dumb.

This vast hypocrisy of Western Freedom and the Western Way of Life is admittedly sickening to contemplate. But why has it been allowed to grow up and spread its corrupting virus throughout Europe and Britain? Every time an intellectual has attempted to divert the flames of guilt from his shuddering conscience by raising a plaintive bleat that some Soviet writer or musician has been harshly criticised, he is contributing to the propagation of a blight which is infecting the roots of our own cultural life; he is covering up and condoning the murder of the human spirit in the West, not simply by ideological filibustering, but by economic sanctions and by judicial force. It must be obvious to anyone of understanding that when the head of a civilisation is so corrupt, when its imposed ideology is as degraded and cynical as the mass produced film and press show it to be, its motives and actions will be corrupt and criminal too, and that the end for which it works is simply catastrophe.

Has that corruption already incurably poisoned the intelligence of Britain? Are the intellectuals already sold into sycophancy? The fact that this country cannot seem to support a single serious literary magazine, gives grave suspicion. Perhaps the American market has proved too seductive. Or can it be

that the majority came so nicely out of the last war, for which they were not called to any very arduous service, that they are not particularly alarmed by the prospect of another? Or that they are utterly broken in faith, self-confidence and courage by their failure to prevent the last? Can it be that their spiteful little sneers at the Soviet Union and the New Democracies ("which, pardon me, I do not mean to visit") really arise from the bitterness of secret envy and self-contempt?

Whatever the answer, the reality of the Western Way of Life stalks nakedly across the hemisphere in all the horror of neo-Nazism, and as yet the intellectual section of the population remains bewilderingly, shockingly acquiescent in the destruction even of its own professional interests. It is time, high time, for intellectual Resistance, for the reassertion of the healthy intelligence, the protection of sane thought, clean feeling and honest human motive. Let us raise this cry, and see what response is made, and then we shall know how far the questions asked above can be blessedly scratched out.

Under this heading we shall continue to publish factual material showing what the talk about the Western Way really masks. We believe that Freedom, like Charity, begins at home.—And in connection with the "joy of the mind" lost to the "Westerns", consider Picasso's statue (his first) unveiled before a huge crowd on August 6th in the working-class town of Vallaurie, the Man with the Lamb, *which, Tristan Tzara declares "embodies the will to live, simple but how deeply rooted, of millions and millions of people in a future that is marvellous and yet within the reach of everyone's hopes".*—EDITOR.

SPECIMEN ONE DAY'S CROP

(*August* 25, 1950)

(1) The Lord Chamberlain bans the play, *The Baker's Daughter,* due to be produced at the Spa Theatre, as "too like the story of Seretze Khama's marriage", i.e. as dealing with imperialist attitudes in regard to Africans.

(2) Neville Ormonde is sentenced to three months (suspended for three years) in Cape Town under the Immorality Act and the Mixed Marriages Act, for marrying a coloured girl, aged 19. The marriage is annulled though the wife is with child.

(3) Police and troops in full field-equipment attack and seize the magazine *Hoy* (Communist) at Havana.

(4) Chicago's police-censor bans the film *No Way Out* for attacking racial prejudice.

When one day's glance at our gutter-press yields these items, we can guess how many there are that are not mentioned.

MODERN GREEK POETRY

RAE DALVEN, whose translation of Loudemis appears in this issue, has just published *Modern Greek Poetry* (Gaer, New York: distributed in Britain by Collet's Foreign Dept., 67 Gt. Russell Street, London, W.C.1., 24/-)—a collection of 150 poems with a long introduction. She begins with Kornaros and Pheraios (17th and 18th century); deals with the major poets of the last century, such as Solomos; and does not forget a section on the very vigorous folksongs. The reader is thus given the necessary perspective to see in the round the more recent poets, who make up the major part of her book.

Arena 6 will publish her full version of Vrettakos' magnificent 33 *Days*. These Greek poems maintain a richness of imagery which has close links with the folk-tradition, and which thus keeps a strong emotional appeal. In the problem of writing poetry which is incomparably intense and pure in its human force, and which, *because* of its deep engagement in politics, finds a true artistic resolution, we have much to learn from them.

Two Artists look at Spain

John Minton and Paul Hogarth recently visited Spain. Minton went South, to Granada, Andalusia, the Levante; Hogarth to the Asturias and the Ebro. Hogarth had been in Spain eleven years before, a member of the International Brigade during the Civil War. He found that War still in everyone's thoughts. "In the village smithy a group of men and boys stand about. Talk begins, and it is not long before the War is being recalled . . . As they talk their faces are alive with enthusiasm."

A mechanic who has served an eight-year sentence for serving in the Republican Army: he got away but came back. *(Hogarth)*

Alicante, where a massacre of the Republicans took place in the early days of the Civil War—a panorama that evokes the past. (*Minton*)

Collection Jack Taylor, Esq.

A Moorish Infantryman, in a village near Mieres in the Asturias. "It is not surprising that in the cafés and bars, miners leave when Moors enter. Probably in no other part of Spain are the old hatreds so fierce and so sustained. Certainly in no other part is there such a formidable array of armed force. Every pit is closely guarded." (*Hogarth*)

Private Collection

Valencia (*Minton*): a splendid past and a poverty-stricken present. The artist went several times to the cinema and was impressed by the reaction of the audience to news-reels (invariably concerned with Franco officiating at the launching of a battleship, the opening of an airfield or barracks). There was always complete silence made more striking by the occasional intrusion of an inarticulate cry of some odd Phalangist.

Asturian Miner, who lost a leg in the defence of the village against Mola's column of Moors sent to relieve Oviedo. "He refuses to let me make a portrait of him (having seen me sketch a Moorish officer in the café); and only after I make it quite clear that I am not a Fascist does he consent."

(*Hogarth*)

Retired Francoist Officer in Valladolid; an infantry Captain in the Civil War, who commented that even now Spain wasn't rid of the Reds, and boasted of the ruthless methods he had used—a mixture of brag, cynicism, ingratiating fear, all very much according to type.

(*Hogarth*)